

1

A Win at the U.S. Supreme Court

Our legal team helped deliver a critical win that protected the funding and operational framework for public charter schools nationwide. The Supreme Court's 4-4 decision in *St. Isidore v. Drummond* affirmed the Oklahoma State Supreme Court decision declaring that charter schools are public and therefore cannot be religious. NAPCS galvanized the charter community by articulating the key legal arguments offered by the Oklahoma Attorney General and across dozens of amicus briefs, developing a nationwide communications strategy elevating the potential catastrophic loss of funding (points mentioned by Supreme Court Justices during oral arguments), and executing a campaign to keep the sector informed and united in defense. With a 4-4 decision, there is no decision binding on courts outside of Oklahoma, so we expect that the same question will reemerge. Fortunately, we are even better prepared for the next case, now armed with state-by-state law analyses and model legislation, new legal theories for the Court to adopt, and stronger connections with state partners poised to prevent local issues from rising to national threats.

2

A Breakthrough for the Federal Charter Schools Program

For the first time in six years, the Charter Schools Program (CSP) received a funding increase. The CSP is the only source of federal funding dedicated to expanding public charter schools, and this year's \$60 million increase brings total federal funding to \$500 million. The U.S. Department of Education also took our recommendations and rolled back red tape and bureaucratic overreach in the program's rules. This reflects the strongest support our movement has had in Washington in a decade. With the new funding and more supportive regulatory environment, applications for CSP grants doubled in 2025.

3

Historic State-Level Gains

In addition to many significant facilities, funding, and authorizing legislative wins in red, blue, and purple states led by state charter school associations, NAPCS secured seven legislative victories across four states: Montana, North Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Most notably, we got enabling charter school legislation enacted in North Dakota, making it the 47th state in the country to allow public charter schools. In another notable win, we were able to remove Wyoming's cap on charter school growth when we persuaded the Legislature to override the Governor's veto of our cap-lift bill. We were also able to get a funding equity bill enacted there. In Montana and West Virginia, we got bills enacted to improve the authorizing and operating environments for charter schools. Taken together, these wins will allow the growth of high-quality charter schools in four of the newest states to join the charter school family.



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4

Landmark Federal Legislative Progress

For the first time ever, the National Alliance is advancing three separate pieces of legislation through Congress to reform the CSP. The legislation reflects the lessons learned from the past 30 years and will make the program more impactful and effective by increasing flexibility and access to funding and eliminating rules and regulations that make the program difficult to implement and access. The bills are currently advancing through Congress with significant bipartisan support. Over the next couple of months, we expect that all three bills will move through committees (one is already through) and be positioned for floor votes before the end of this Congress. We also achieved several wins through the appropriations process, including a big win for facilities by allowing federal State Facilities Incentive Grant funds to cover up to 100% of the required state match in the first two years of a facilities project and allowing other facilities support programs – such as a revolving loan fund – to qualify for funding.

5

A Stronger, More Unified Coalition

This year, 95 organizations – from national nonprofits to single-site charter schools – joined together on a letter asking Congress to support CSP funding. Seventy-four organizations signed onto Supreme Court amicus briefs filed in the NAPCS-led campaign to preserve public charter schools in the Drummond case. Twenty-three state associations and seven national partners, and many charter schools amplified our messaging during National Charter Schools Week on social media – which reached more than 3.34 million people – reflecting the unity and momentum of this movement.

Looking Ahead

In 2026, we'll be teaming up with charter school champions on both sides of the aisle to keep charter schools a bipartisan priority – from the White House to the State House to the Court House. We will continue to defend the charter community in court; advance smart legislation to support charter school growth, funding, and autonomy; and strengthen the coalition that sustains this progress.



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