

# Students, Citizens and Our Nation's Future

Alaska State Senate Education Committee  
Hearing on SCR1  
February 6, 2016

Michael Poliakoff

American Council of Trustees and Alumni



**ACTA**  
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF  
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI



# A CRISIS IN CIVIC EDUCATION

a report by the  
American Council of Trustees and Alumni

# Constitution Day Survey 2015 (multiple choice) College Graduate Correct Responses

- Who is the current President of the Senate? 54%
- How long are terms for members of Congress? 53.5%
- Who was the “Father of the Constitution”? 28.4%
- What is required before a proposed amendment can be approved as part of the Constitution 41.6%
- What is the Bill of Rights? 66.7%

*GfK Omni Web Knowledge Panel*

Which of the following people serves on the U.S. Supreme Court?

- |                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| a. Elena Kagan            | 61.6% |
| b. Lawrence Warren Pierce | 21.7% |
| c. John Kerry             | 5.5%  |
| d. Judith Sheindlin       | 9.6%  |
| e. Refused answer         | 1.6%  |



## National Perspectives on Historical Illiteracy

ACTA, *Losing America's Memory* (February 2000)

Survey of 556 college seniors at the “Top 25” National Universities and the “Top 25” National Liberal Arts Colleges.

- Beavis and Butthead 99% identified correctly
- Snoop Dogg 98% identified correctly
- George Washington as general at Yorktown 34% identified correctly
- James Madison as Father of the Constitution 23% identified correctly
- Abraham Lincoln as author of the words:  
“Government of the people, by the people,  
for the people” 22% identified correctly

## Cause and Effect ...

### ACTA'S Study of the Core Curriculum: What Will They Learn? <sup>TM</sup>

**82%** of four-year colleges and universities do **not** require foundational study of American history or government

## Bottom Line

“We need clear requirements for knowledge of American institutions, not vague statements of purpose. Good intentions are not a substitute for a curriculum.”

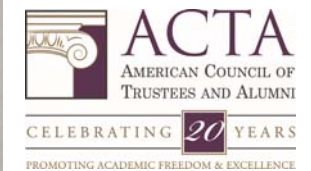
“Make it a required course. Simply require it.”

American Council of Trustees and Alumni, *A Crisis in Civic Education* (Washington, D.C, 2016)

# Georgia State University



"As required by Georgia law, all students must demonstrate knowledge of the history and constitutions of the United States and of Georgia."







# Nevada

**NRS 396.500 Instruction in United States Constitution and Nevada's Constitution; examination.**

**1. Instruction within the System must be given in the essentials of the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Nevada, including the origin and history of the Constitutions and the study of and devotion to American institutions and ideals. ...**

**3. The System shall not issue a certificate or diploma of graduation to a student who has not passed a satisfactory examination upon the Constitutions.**



# Texas

Sec. 51.301. GOVERNMENT OR POLITICAL SCIENCE. (a) Every college and university receiving state support or state aid from public funds shall give a course of instruction in government or political science which includes consideration of the **Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas.** This course shall have a credit value of not less than six semester hours or its equivalent.

# James Madison 1822

Learned Institutions ought to be favorite objects with every free people. They throw that light over the public mind which is the best security against crafty & dangerous encroachments on the public liberty. ...

What spectacle can be more edifying or more seasonable, than that of Liberty & Learning, each leaning on the other for their mutual & surest support?