



Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What problem is addressed by the Civics Education Initiative?

A. *Too few citizens know and understand basic American civics - how our government works and who we are as a nation. By example, according to the Pew Research Center, only about one-third of Americans can name the three branches of government, much less say what each does.*

Q. What is the impact of this lack of civics knowledge?

A. *If you don't know how our government works, you're not likely to be an active and engaged citizen. It's no wonder so few citizens vote, given this lack of basic civics knowledge.*

Q. Why isn't civics being better taught in our schools today?

A. *Education funding is increasingly tied to high stakes testing on reading, math and science, with a particular focus on STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering, and math. While important, this emphasis is leaving civics as a secondary subject or in some cases, not being taught all together.*

Q. How does the Civics Education Initiative address this problem?

A. *The Civics Education Initiative is simple in concept. It requires High School students, as a condition for graduation, to pass a test on 100 basic facts of US history and civics taken from the United States Citizenship Civics Test – the test all immigrants applying for US citizenship must pass.*

Q. How do immigrants taking the test compare to our own High School students?

A. *According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), 92% of immigrants who take the required civics test for citizenship pass. Yet studies by the Annenberg Foundation show that a third of all U.S. citizens can't name even one branch of our federal government.*

Q. Why use this specific USCIS US Citizenship Civics test?

A. *We already require by Federal law that new citizens must learn these 100 facts so they can be prepared to be active and engaged citizens. By using this well established test, there is no cost to develop a new test, next to no cost involved to administer the test, and a myriad of study materials for this test already exist.*

Q. What does the Civics Education Initiative legislative language specifically say?

A. *All (State) High School students, attending any public or charter school, or a student seeking a general educational development (GED) equivalency, shall, as a condition of High School graduation or its equivalency, take and receive a passing grade on the United States Citizenship Civics Test, produced by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The test shall be the specific 100 questions used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) and administered to all applicants for US citizenship. High School students shall be tested on all 100 questions, with a minimum score of 60% being required for passage. High School Students may take the test as many times as necessary for passage, but must pass the test prior to receiving a certificate of High School graduation or a GED equivalency. All (State) schools shall certify that a student has taken the test and received a passing grade on the test, in a way it deems as adequate to ensure the requirements of this Act are followed.*



CIVICS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

100 Facts Every High School Student Should Know

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Q. Is the Civics Education Initiative a popular idea?

A. *Overwhelmingly so! A recent national survey showed 74 percent of likely voters support or strongly support the Civics Education Initiative, including overwhelming support among Men – 78%, Women – 71%, Republicans – 84%, Independents – 75%, Democrats – 68%, Anglos – 76%, Hispanics – 76%, and African American – 60%.*

Q. Who is promoting the Civics Education Initiative effort?

A. *The Civics Initiative www.CivicsEducationInitiative.com is project of the Joe Foss Institute www.JoeFossInstitute.org as part of its continuing efforts to promote an appreciation for America's freedoms, public service, patriotism and integrity. The Civics Education Initiative National Board of Advisors includes former US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Pulitzer winning journalist Carl Bernstein and award winning actor Joe Mantegna.*

Q. What are the goals and timing of the Civics Education Initiative?

A. *The Civics Education Initiative has as its goal the enactment of legislation in all 50 states by a date certain – September 17, 2017 – the 230th anniversary of the US Constitution.*

Q. What other states have passed this initiative?

A. *Nine states passed the Civics Education Initiative in 2015 (AZ, ND, SD, UT, ID, TN, SC, LA, and WI). There are over two dozen additional states considering legislation for 2016.*

Q. How much will the test cost to implement?

A. *By using this well-established test and study materials that are already easily available online, as well as the online test portal provided by the Joe Foss Institute, several states have estimated little to no fiscal impact.*

Additionally, by promoting local control and maximum flexibility for individual school districts, costs can be minimal. Several states have controlled costs by allowing local school districts to determine how best to implement the test. By simply avoiding state-mandated reporting requirements the vast majority of costs associated with taking and passing the test can be eliminated.