



# A CRISIS IN CIVIC EDUCATION

a report by the  
American Council of Trustees and Alumni



This report was prepared by the staff of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, with primary contributions from William Gonch, under the direction of Dr. Michael Poliakoff, Vice President of Policy.

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni is an independent, nonprofit organization committed to academic freedom, excellence, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. Founded in 1995, ACTA is the only national organization dedicated to working with alumni, donors, trustees, and education leaders across the United States to support liberal arts education, uphold high academic standards, safeguard the free exchange of ideas on campus, and ensure that the next generation receives an intellectually rich, high-quality education at an affordable price. Our network consists of alumni and trustees from more than 1,100 colleges and universities, including over 20,000 current board members. Our quarterly newsletter, *Inside Academe*, reaches nearly 13,000 readers.

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“In today’s world, when so many nations are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to incorporate different ethnic, religious, and racial groups, the case for reminding Americans of their history in our museums and in our schools and colleges and universities . . . could not be stronger—especially as that history conveys our nation’s stunning successful recipe, based on the documents of our founding, for an inclusive and tolerant society.”

— Louise Mirrer, President, New-York Historical Society,  
on accepting ACTA’s Philip Merrill Award for Outstanding  
Contributions to Liberal Arts Education, 2014

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# A CRISIS IN CIVIC EDUCATION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a crisis in American civic education. Survey after survey shows that recent college graduates are alarmingly ignorant of America's history and heritage. They cannot identify the term lengths of members of Congress, the substance of the First Amendment, or the origin of the separation of powers. They do not know the Father of the Constitution, and nearly 10% say that Judith Sheindlin—"Judge Judy"—is on the Supreme Court.

Studies show that our colleges and universities are doing little or nothing to address the knowledge gap. A recent survey by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) of over 1,100 liberal arts colleges and universities found that only a handful—18%—require students to take even one survey course in American history or government before they graduate.

Since 2000, institutions ranging from the Carnegie Corporation to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences have urged colleges and universities to take a much more active role in educating students for informed citizenship. And yet little good has come of their efforts. Instead of demanding content-based coursework, our institutions have, in too many places, supplanted the rigorous study of history and government—the building blocks of civic engagement—with community-service activities. These programs may be wholesome, but they give students little insight into how our system of government works and what roles they must fill as citizens of a democratic republic.

What knowledge students do receive of their history is often one-sided and tendentious. Lately, student protesters have sought to expunge historic figures like Thomas Jefferson or Woodrow Wilson from campus, deeming these men too flawed to deserve monuments or buildings that bear their names. These protesters properly

remind us of the cancer of racism that has infected our nation, but their demands are made on campuses where there is little reason to believe that students are sufficiently grounded in knowledge and understanding of the history of America and its civic institutions to make sound judgments.

In a country that depends upon an educated populace, ignorance of our history and founding documents will be disastrous. An annual survey by the Newseum Institute gives point to the alarm: When asked to identify the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, one-third of Americans could not name a single right; 43% could not even name freedom of speech as one of those rights.<sup>1</sup>

How did we get to such a state? And what is to be done? In the following pages, we outline the problem, and, more importantly, what we must do to restore rich civic education for all students and especially the college graduates who will be our next generation of leaders.

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## The Problem

Educators and policymakers know we have a problem. For the last 15 years, organizations across the educational spectrum have focused on the need to revive Americans' civic knowledge. As early as 2000, ACTA released the disturbing findings of *Losing America's Memory*. In this study, ACTA tested basic historical knowledge among seniors at the 55 top-ranked colleges and universities in the United States. The majority of students failed to identify the significance of Valley Forge, key words from the Gettysburg Address, or even basic facts about the Voting Rights Act. If students had received grades, more than 80% would have received a D or F.<sup>2</sup>

ACTA's findings ran in hundreds of newspapers across the country, and nationally syndicated columnists warned about declining historical awareness. Concerned that this profound ignorance was a threat to the future of our democracy, the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress passed a unanimous concurrent resolution calling on trustees, state officials, and citizens to address America's historical illiteracy.<sup>3</sup>

A wide range of national studies and recommendations for reform followed—at both the K–12 and college level. In 2002, the Association of American Colleges

and Universities (AAC&U) appointed a working group of K–12 teachers, leaders of nonprofit organizations, and higher education representatives to survey the available resources for developing civic understanding and skills. In 2004, a report sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation and other agencies, *From Classroom to Citizen*, documented deep public support for civic education in public schools, widespread impatience with existing school programs, and a solid mandate for testing students to determine what they did—and did not—know.<sup>4</sup>

And in 2010, the Department of Education commissioned the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement to investigate ways to increase the level of civic literacy among college students. The resulting report, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*, was released at the White House with extensive publicity. The program proposed to reverse what Charles N. Quigley, executive director of the Center for Civic Education, identified as America's "civics recession."<sup>5</sup>

Then in 2012, a bipartisan group of U.S. senators and representatives requested a report from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to explore how "to achieve long-term national goals for our intellectual and economic well-being; for a stronger, more vibrant civil society; and for the success of cultural diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century." The resulting study, *The Heart of the Matter*, called on K–12 schools and other institutions to "promote the basic literacies and civic skills that sustain a robust public forum for the exchange of ideas."<sup>6</sup>

Finally in 2014, the *Degree Qualifications Profile* (DQP) by the Lumina Foundation called for institutions of higher education to meet requirements in "Civic and Global Learning."<sup>7</sup>

In sum, the last 15 years have seen several major attempts to address Americans' civic knowledge.

## No Improvement

Despite the chorus of concerns, the 2010 administration of the federally sponsored National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) civics test only confirmed that the decade had seen little improvement in the civic knowledge of K–12 students. While nearly all 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported studying civics, only 24% scored at the

“proficient” level or above. Indeed, 36% did not even reach a “basic” achievement level, indicating that they were unable to “describe forms of political participation available in a democracy” or “provide simple interpretations of nontext-based information such as maps, charts, tables, graphs, and cartoons.”<sup>8</sup> Citing insufficient funding, NAEP’s federally appointed governing board cut the 2014 test in civics and the test in American history for high school seniors and administered the exam only to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. And it is not an encouraging sign that the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade scores for both tests showed no significant improvement from the 2010 administration.<sup>9</sup> Appendix A reproduces two sample NAEP questions provided by the Department of Education.

The grim reality is that college graduates *continue* to show a level of ignorance of America’s system of government just as high school students do. Our vast national expenditure on higher education has had little or no measurable effect on giving students the skills and knowledge they need for effective citizenship.

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### Civic Knowledge of College Graduates Today

In late summer of 2015, ACTA commissioned the research firm GfK to survey recent American college graduates and the public at large about their understanding of our free institutions of government. Our questions were drawn from standard high school civics curricula. They emphasized the content of the U.S. Constitution and the basic workings of our government. A smaller number of questions also asked about prominent figures currently serving in the federal government.

The results were abysmal. For example:

- Only 20.6% of respondents could identify James Madison as the Father of the Constitution. More than 60% thought the answer was Thomas

Jefferson—despite the fact that Jefferson, as U.S. ambassador to France, was not present during the Constitutional Convention.

- College graduates performed little better: Only 28.4% named Madison, and 59.2% chose Jefferson.
- How do Americans amend the Constitution? More than half of college graduates didn't know. Almost 60% of college graduates failed to identify correctly a requirement for ratifying a constitutional amendment.
- We live in a dangerous world—but almost 40% of college graduates didn't know that Congress has the power to declare war.
- College graduates were even confused about the term lengths of members of Congress. Almost half could not recognize that senators are elected to six-year terms and representatives are elected to two-year terms.
- Less than half of college graduates knew that presidential impeachments are tried before the U.S. Senate.
- And 9.6% of college graduates marked that Judith Sheindlin—"Judge Judy"—was on the Supreme Court!

Many of the figures may actually *understate* how poorly our colleges are doing because older respondents performed significantly better than younger ones. For example, 98.2% of college graduates over the age of 65 knew that the president cannot establish taxes—but only 73.8% of college graduates aged 25–34 answered correctly.

Most college graduates over age 65 knew how to amend the Constitution—76.7% answered correctly. But among college graduates aged 25–34, less than a third chose the right answer, and over half answered that the president must ratify an amendment, failing to comprehend how the division of powers among coequal branches protects citizens' rights.<sup>10</sup> For detailed survey results, see Appendix B.

These were not isolated findings. A 2012 ACTA survey found that less than 20% of American college graduates could accurately identify the effect of the Emancipation Proclamation, less than half could identify George Washington as the American general at Yorktown, and only 42% knew that the Battle of the Bulge occurred during World War II.<sup>11</sup>

A 2014 ACTA survey found that one-third of college graduates were unaware that FDR spearheaded the New Deal, and nearly half did not know that Teddy Roosevelt played a major role in constructing the Panama Canal. A survey published early in 2015 found that over one-third could not place the Civil War within the correct 20-year time frame.<sup>12</sup>

When surveys repeatedly show that college graduates do not understand the fundamental processes of our government and the historical forces that shaped it, the problem is much greater than a simple lack of factual knowledge. It is a dangerous sign of civic disempowerment.

## The Proliferation of Non-Solutions

Given all the interest expressed in civic education, how has this happened? The simple answer: a proliferation of programs that do not address the problem. Too many colleges and universities confuse community service and student activism with civic education. Service learning and political engagement form a wholesome part of the development of character and, when judiciously chosen, lead to civic virtue. But without coursework in American history and government, such activities achieve little of substance. Too often, proposals for civic renewal have been overly broad and vague. While they have called for more civic education, they have generally failed to define civic knowledge or require objective assessment. Contemporary discussions of civic education also suffer from what might be called the “universalist fallacy,” which dismisses special concentration on the U.S. Constitution and the founding principles of the nation because such an emphasis makes a “normative” judgment about the priority of certain issues over others in the education of young Americans.<sup>13</sup>

Let’s examine the major reports on civic education, one by one.

*A Crucible Moment*, the major Department of Education–commissioned report, urges Americans to “expand the number of robust, generative civic partnerships and alliances locally, nationally, and globally to address common problems, empower people to act, strengthen communities and nations, and generate new frontiers of knowledge.”<sup>14</sup> Yet when the report turns to recommendations, it devotes little attention to concrete curricular requirements, objective assessments, or benchmarks of civic and historical understanding. By fixating on “civic partnerships” and

local alliances, the report—far from enhancing civic education—in fact distracts institutions from their unique mission of educating citizens.

*A Crucible Moment's* other recommendations are little more than gibberish. We can be glad, on first blush, that *A Crucible Moment* calls on schools to “make a comprehensive and contemporary framework for civic learning and democratic engagement an overarching expectation for every student in general education programs, majors, and technical training.”<sup>15</sup> But the report offers no insights into what would satisfy these requirements, and it does not provide guidelines for assessing student learning.

The Lumina Foundation's *Degree Qualifications Profile* similarly fails to provide any clue as to the actual substance of effective civic education or to provide objective metrics for ensuring students have mastered the basic principles of American civics. It states, instead, that its “summative” judgments have “nothing to do with specific course requirements” and that “course equivalents are not proxies for proficiency.” It “invites evidence about student proficiency in a way that keeps faculty judgment firmly in control,” without ever suggesting objective, quantifiable measures of student learning. Indeed, the DQP does not even require that college coursework be used to demonstrate mastery of college-level material: “The proficiencies it articulates can be demonstrated at any time—on entry to college and at any time in a student's academic career at the degree level indicated.”<sup>16</sup>

Because major guides such as *A Crucible Moment* and the *Degree Qualifications Profile* de-emphasize course content, colleges have little incentive to require civic knowledge of their students. In fact, ACTA's What Will They Learn?™ project, a national study of core curricula, found that only 18% of American colleges and universities require even one foundational course in U.S. history or government.<sup>17</sup>

It is not at all unusual to find that even history majors can graduate without a required course in American history. For example, at Bates College (where tuition and fees are \$47,030 per year), history majors must take two courses addressing either Latin American or East Asian history, but they have no requirement to take a course in U.S. history.<sup>18</sup> Although the department advises history majors considering graduate school to include such coursework, it does not take the logical step of making American history part of the major. Amherst, Bowdoin, University of

Wisconsin–Madison, and Brown are just a few more high-profile schools that fail to require American history within their history major.<sup>19</sup>

The history of America cannot be known apart from the history of the Constitution, with all of the debates and court cases that form its ongoing history. Moreover, our freedom was won and tested on the battlefield and in our relations with other nations. But the course catalogs and faculty staffing of so many history departments, including the most prestigious, show that too many colleges and universities neglect these key areas within American history—military, diplomatic, and constitutional history. These core topics are dismissed as part of an old-fashioned “hegemonic” view of history, to be replaced by a new focus on race, class, and gender. As Pulitzer Prize–winning historian Gordon Wood sadly observed, “Academic historians are not much interested in constitutional history these days. Historians who write on America’s constitutional past are a vanishing breed.”<sup>20</sup>

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— Gordon Wood, Alva O. Way University Professor and  
Professor of History Emeritus, Brown University;  
2011 recipient of the National Humanities Medal

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Is it any wonder that this curricular breakdown has resulted in the limited knowledge of college graduates manifested in our recent surveys?

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. In 2012, in response to the AAC&U’s celebration of its role in producing *A Crucible Moment*, ACTA observed that this higher education association “could do immensely more good for civic literacy by encouraging the AAC&U membership, in the clearest of terms, to walk the walk of civic literacy. Make it a required course. Simply require it.” But that straightforward act of responsibility has yet to happen.<sup>21</sup>

## Why Civic Knowledge Matters

America was founded on an idea that human fulfillment is to be found in liberty and self-government. It is that idea, not some ethnic or genetic inheritance, that unifies us as citizens. The principles of American civic life have given the nation its capacity to be home to so many diverse cultures and identities, but that unique strength in diversity, *e pluribus unum*, is also by nature fragile. Our civic values will fail unless they are constantly renewed through an education that prepares each generation to participate in a democratic republic and to understand the struggles, past and present, that sustain our liberty.

Sometimes, critics see civics as a jingoistic attempt to insist that America is unblemished and to hide our nation's darker moments and failures. Nothing could be further from the truth, as thoughtful civic educators have made clear. Witness what Bruce Cole, former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, said of the *We the People* initiative to revitalize understanding of America: "We will need to tell the story of America's history in its entirety—the peaks and the valleys, the margins and the center. And, of course, the history of the United States cannot be understood in a vacuum. It must include its borders and its neighbors."<sup>22</sup> We can address the fault lines and the insufficiencies of our nation. But without informed civic consciousness, we lose our ability to disagree but still be partners in American self-government and find solutions that transcend ideology and faction.

Moreover, we draw insight and inspiration from understanding the difficult path our nation has traveled to hold those freedoms. As Wilfred McClay, the G. T. and Libby Blankenship Chair in the History of Liberty at the University of Oklahoma, has articulated, "one becomes an American less by *descent* than by *consent*." He observes:

The battlefields and patriot graves deserved our reverence not simply for sentimental reasons, or out of reverence for our ancestors' great sacrifices, but because of the cause for which they sacrificed. It would not have been enough had they merely died for the 19<sup>th</sup>-century equivalent of baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet. They died, as Lincoln expressed it in the Gettysburg Address, in order that government of the people, by the people, and for the people "shall not perish from the earth."<sup>23</sup>

## What Must Be Done?

The only effective therapy for ignorance is rigorous study and learning. The following actions should be taken immediately to ensure that students receive a strong civic education.

### *By Colleges and Universities*

Colleges and universities should make recovery from America's "civics recession" a top priority. To begin, *every college and university should require at least one course in the history of America, the workings of its free institutions, and the core documents that illuminate our principles of government.*

Colleges should grant exemptions from this requirement sparingly, and only to students who demonstrate a college-level understanding of American government. Nationally normed tests such as the AP U.S. History and U.S. Government exams can provide a reasonable exemption, as can tests developed and administered by the college. One thing they must *not* do is to believe that freshmen come to college with an adequate knowledge of American history and government. The evidence of the NAEP tests and the evidence of the civic illiteracy of college graduates are compelling and conclusive. It is dishonest for a college or university to pretend that its students do not need further coursework in a subject so crucial to the future of this nation.

Colleges and universities should assess their own programs' effectiveness by using objective tests to measure students' knowledge when they enter and when they graduate. Colleges and universities should experiment boldly to determine the best ways to teach students about civic processes and the history of their development—but they must not hesitate to replace poor programs with better ones. Courses with a narrow focus that fail to provide a broad and balanced coverage of American history and government, especially in the absence of robust study of core documents, do students a great disservice. While respecting shared governance and the academic freedom of faculty, college leaders must insist that programs for history majors include requirements for the advanced study of our nation's history and the development of its institutions of government. They should also see to it that history departments achieve disciplinary breadth by hiring faculty with expertise in core fields of U.S. military, diplomatic, and constitutional history.

Some schools will want to supplement a required civics program with further endeavors, such as service learning or engaged citizenship programs. Such outreach programs should be encouraged—but they must *supplement* requirements for coursework in U.S. government and history. They cannot replace the academic study and understanding of the institutions of American government.

Ideally, American history and government should be part of a comprehensive general education program that includes mathematics, literature, economics, the natural sciences, and other fields that provide a solid foundation for careers and citizenship. Broad-based general education programs allow students to understand the American experience in the context of Western and world history, the history of ideas, the arts and humanities, and the social and natural sciences.

### *By Federal and State Governments*

By not funding the 2014 12<sup>th</sup>-grade NAEP test of civics, as well as the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade test of American history, Congress sent disturbing signals to educators. It is a national priority to know where we stand. If the results are poor—as is very likely—then the nation needs to confront and address the deficiency.

Colleges and universities themselves should require all students to take a course in the history and government of the United States. Boards of trustees and administrators should not hesitate to be part of this crucial process to ensure the requirement is robust and effective. When public institutions fail to take this initiative for themselves, however, it falls to state legislators to establish guidelines that ensure the satisfactory civic education of students at taxpayer-funded institutions of higher education.

In establishing requirements for the study of American history and government in public higher education, state lawmakers must always respect academic freedom and avoid micromanaging course content. They must respect the expertise of faculty members. However, legislators should not shy away from explicitly prescribing collegiate study of key texts (such as the U.S. Constitution or the *Federalist Papers*) or major periods in American history.

Several states, including Oklahoma, Nevada, Texas, and Georgia, have such requirements. For example, Georgia requires that all students graduating from

public universities in the state “must demonstrate knowledge of the history and constitutions of the United States and of Georgia.” This requirement can be satisfied with college-level coursework or by completing rigorous exams administered by a student’s university.<sup>24</sup> Other states should enact similar requirements if the institutions themselves fail to do so.

States should mandate outcomes assessments in civic education and tie public funds to schools’ fulfillment of these mandates.

### *By Alumni and Donors*

Alumni can exercise a powerful influence on the direction of their alma maters. They should become involved with alumni groups and defend curricular standards in American history and government as well as other fields in order to protect the value of their degrees.

Donors, whether large or small, can help revive high-quality civic education by targeting their gifts to outstanding programs in U.S. government and history. Donors should not contribute to their alma maters’ general funds if their interest is specifically in civic education; instead, they should make direct contributions to programs that advance key educational goals. Donors can consult ACTA’s *Intelligent Donors Guide* to find guidelines for identifying strong programs, and they can also find a list of outstanding programs on our Oases of Excellence web page.<sup>25</sup> If a strong program in government and civics is not available, a donor can partner with civic-minded faculty members to create one.

Donors should be careful to guard their gifts by writing clear statements of intent into their contracts. Such statements protect not only donors but also programs and faculty members. Professors involved in civics programs are often dedicated to the vision that they share with donors, but if a donor does not make his intent clear and nonnegotiable, the outcome might be far from the original intention.

### *By Foundations*

Foundations, like individual donors, should target their gifts to programs that will enhance civic education. Late last year, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Gilder

Lehrman Institute of American History announced a partnership with this very goal in mind—providing students access to the highly acclaimed, and historically sound, musical *Hamilton*, along with classroom materials. Creator Lin-Manuel Miranda called the gift a unique opportunity to inspire and educate students about the continuing relevance of the Founding Fathers. Foundations should establish clear guidelines and principles for the programs they support, with an emphasis on solid historical content. And they should insist on regular, detailed reports with objective assessments of learning outcomes.

### *By Students and Families*

Students should seek out colleges that offer a coherent general education program that is well grounded in the liberal arts, including American history and government. They should avoid colleges that allow a grab-bag approach to general education.

Before choosing a college, prospective students and parents should consult ACTA's WhatWillTheyLearn.com to examine each college's general education program. In addition, they should ask faculty and current students about general education at each school. The best colleges and universities understand different academic disciplines as parts of an interrelated body of skills and knowledge, and they require all students to take a core series of liberal arts courses. At these schools, learning continues outside of the classroom more easily because a student who is pondering an issue in the *Federalist Papers* or in John Locke's works can talk to her friends, her roommates, and fellow members of her extracurricular groups—all of whom will have read the same books and be ready to join in vigorous and informed intellectual exchange on issues of enduring national importance.

Students who attend colleges with weak general education programs can make up for their schools' shortcomings by carefully selecting courses that will expose them to a wide range of important areas, including a thorough grounding in American history and government. Parents should help their children identify essential fields and resist the allure of trendy courses that do not provide students with the foundation that they require to be effective citizens.

## Conclusion

America's founders were united in their belief that our government requires engaged, well-informed citizens committed to the practice of self-government. Benjamin Franklin, when asked what form of government the Constitutional Convention had established, famously replied, "a republic, if you can keep it." And Thomas Jefferson observed, "A nation that expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, expects what never was and never will be."

For the last 20 years, our colleges and universities have done a poor job of keeping the republic. They are awarding college diplomas to students, many of whom lack the most elementary understanding of our government. By allowing civic illiteracy, we have disempowered our young citizens. We have weakened our ability to understand the democratic government we have received, to participate in it, to improve what needs reform, and to pass our institutions of free government down to the next generation. We must all view with alarm the polarized political culture we face nationally and on so many college campuses, a culture that breeds ill-informed, ad hominem polemic. It is self-evident that a common collegiate conversation on the principles of American life is our best hope for reinvigorating the open debate and discussion essential for self-government.

The way forward is clear. A renewal of civic education can reverse America's civic deficit and restore widespread awareness of our history and government. It is time for students, parents, colleges and universities, and lawmakers to confront the crisis in civic education.

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- 19 See the websites for the schools’ respective history departments: Amherst College: [www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/history/major/chart](http://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/history/major/chart); Bowdoin College: [www.bowdoin.edu/history/curriculum-requirements](http://www.bowdoin.edu/history/curriculum-requirements); University of Wisconsin–Madison: [www.pubs.wisc.edu/ug/ls\\_history.htm#req](http://www.pubs.wisc.edu/ug/ls_history.htm#req); and Brown University: [www.brown.edu/academics/history/history-concentration](http://www.brown.edu/academics/history/history-concentration).
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## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

### Sample Questions from the NAEP Test of Civic Knowledge

#### Sample Question 1:

What is one responsibility that modern Presidents have that was not described in the Constitution?

- A. Commanding the armed forces
- B. Granting pardons
- C. Appointing Supreme Court justices
- D. Proposing an annual budget to Congress

Correct answer: D

#### Sample Question 2:

The paragraph below is about the Supreme Court case of *Schenck v. The United States* (1919). In this case, Schenck was prosecuted for having violated the Espionage Act of 1917 by publishing and distributing leaflets that opposed the military draft and U.S. entry into the First World War. The court ruled in favor of the United States. Below is an excerpt from the majority opinion.

We admit that in . . . ordinary times the defendants . . . would have been within their constitutional rights. But the character of every act depends upon the circumstances in which it is done. The most stringent protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic. . . . The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about the evils that Congress has a right to prevent.

What argument is the Supreme Court making in this decision?

- A. Congress can limit free speech as it sees fit.
- B. The right to free speech is basic to democracy and government may never limit it.
- C. Rights are not absolute and the government may limit them in times of crisis.
- D. The judiciary is powerless to overturn laws like the Espionage Act of 1917.

Correct answer: C

## APPENDIX B

### Constitution Day Survey

#### Methodology

The American Council of Trustees and Alumni commissioned GfK to conduct a survey of the American public and of college graduates. Results are based on 1,000 interviews of adults nationwide, ages 18+. Interviews were conducted between August 28, 2015 and August 30, 2015 through GfK's OmniWeb KnowledgePanel—a representative, probability based online panel that covers 97% of the American public. The sample was weighted by age, sex, education, race, household income, metro/non-metro status, internet status, and geographic region. The margin of error on weighted data is +/- 3 percentage points for the full sample and is higher for subgroups.

#### Results

|                                                                             | College Graduates | Total        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| <b>Q1.</b> Which of the following people serves on the U.S. Supreme Court?  |                   |              |
| a. <b>Elena Kagan</b>                                                       | <b>61.6%</b>      | <b>44.0%</b> |
| b. Lawrence Warren Pierce                                                   | 21.7%             | 26.5%        |
| c. John Kerry                                                               | 5.5%              | 11.5%        |
| d. Judith Sheindlin                                                         | 9.6%              | 13.1%        |
| e. Refused                                                                  | 1.6%              | 4.9%         |
| <b>Q2.</b> A trial of impeachment of a U.S. President takes place before... |                   |              |
| a. The District of Columbia Court of Appeals                                | 1.3%              | 2.5%         |
| <b>b. The U.S. Senate</b>                                                   | <b>48.7%</b>      | <b>38.5%</b> |
| c. The U.S. Supreme Court                                                   | 23.8%             | 34.7%        |
| d. The U.S. House of Representatives                                        | 25.0%             | 21.3%        |
| e. Refused                                                                  | 1.1%              | 3.1%         |

**Q3.** What is the Bill of Rights?

|                                                                                |              |              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| a. A signed petition upon which the U.S. Constitution was based                | 23.2%        | 37.5%        |
| <b>b. A name given to a group of Constitutional amendments</b>                 | <b>66.7%</b> | <b>45.9%</b> |
| c. The law among the states prior to the ratification of the U.S. Constitution | 7.0%         | 11.2%        |
| d. A list of demands sent to the British monarchy by colonial Americans        | 2.8%         | 2.5%         |
| e. Refused                                                                     | 0.4%         | 2.9%         |

**Q4.** Which of the following powers is NOT granted to the Executive Branch by the U.S. Constitution?

|                                                 |              |              |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>a. Establishing taxes</b>                    | <b>80.3%</b> | <b>62.1%</b> |
| b. Nominating Supreme Court justices            | 5.4%         | 8.8%         |
| c. Granting pardons                             | 8.2%         | 14.4%        |
| d. Acting as Commander-in-Chief of the military | 5.6%         | 11.0%        |
| e. Refused                                      | 0.4%         | 3.8%         |

**Q5.** Who is the current President of the Senate?

|                     |              |              |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>a. Joe Biden</b> | <b>54.4%</b> | <b>38.7%</b> |
| b. John Roberts     | 6.1%         | 8.3%         |
| c. John Boehner     | 32.1%        | 36.3%        |
| d. Nancy Pelosi     | 6.3%         | 12.0%        |
| e. Refused          | 1.1%         | 4.7%         |

**Q6.** Who was the “Father of the Constitution”?

|                         |              |              |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| a. George Mason         | 1.6%         | 1.9%         |
| b. Thomas Jefferson     | 59.2%        | 60.5%        |
| c. Benjamin Franklin    | 10.1%        | 13.2%        |
| <b>d. James Madison</b> | <b>28.4%</b> | <b>20.6%</b> |
| e. Refused              | 0.7%         | 3.7%         |

|                                                                                                       |              |              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Q7.</b> How long are terms for members of Congress?                                                |              |              |
| a. 4 years for senators, 4 years for representatives                                                  | 9.5%         | 18.9%        |
| <b>b. 6 years for senators, 2 years for representatives</b>                                           | <b>53.5%</b> | <b>37.4%</b> |
| c. 4 years for senators, 2 years for representatives                                                  | 27.6%        | 26.7%        |
| d. 4 years for senators, 6 years for representatives                                                  | 8.4%         | 12.9%        |
| e. Refused                                                                                            | 1.0%         | 4.1%         |
| <b>Q8.</b> Which of the following is NOT protected by the First Amendment?                            |              |              |
| a. Freedom of speech                                                                                  | 2.5%         | 4.0%         |
| <b>b. Right to an education</b>                                                                       | <b>84.3%</b> | <b>64.4%</b> |
| c. Right to petition the government                                                                   | 10.3%        | 22.4%        |
| d. Freedom of assembly                                                                                | 1.6%         | 6.1%         |
| e. Refused                                                                                            | 1.3%         | 3.0%         |
| <b>Q9.</b> The Constitution must be reauthorized every four years.                                    |              |              |
| a. True                                                                                               | 4.2%         | 7.0%         |
| <b>b. False</b>                                                                                       | <b>86.3%</b> | <b>68.8%</b> |
| c. Don't know                                                                                         | 8.5%         | 22.7%        |
| d. Refused                                                                                            | 1.1%         | 1.5%         |
| <b>Q10.</b> What is required before a proposed amendment can be approved as part of the Constitution? |              |              |
| <b>a. Ratification by three-fourths of the states</b>                                                 | <b>41.6%</b> | <b>24.8%</b> |
| b. A two-thirds majority vote in a national referendum                                                | 7.7%         | 11.5%        |
| c. A bill of ratification passed by a supermajority of Congress                                       | 6.3%         | 12.4%        |
| d. A two-thirds vote in both Houses of Congress and Presidential ratification                         | 43.2%        | 46.0%        |
| e. Refused                                                                                            | 1.1%         | 5.2%         |

**Q11.** Under the U.S. Constitution, who can declare war?

|                                       |              |              |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| a. <b>Congress</b>                    | <b>60.1%</b> | <b>43.1%</b> |
| b. The President of the United States | 35.0%        | 47.4%        |
| c. The Supreme Court                  | 0.7%         | 1.8%         |
| d. None of the above                  | 3.3%         | 5.3%         |
| e. Refused                            | 0.9%         | 2.5%         |

**Q12.** Habeas Corpus protects against...

|                                    |              |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| a. Capital punishment              | 6.0%         | 8.9%         |
| b. Cruel and unusual punishment    | 16.7%        | 23.5%        |
| c. <b>Illegal imprisonment</b>     | <b>66.0%</b> | <b>50.6%</b> |
| d. Taxation without representation | 9.3%         | 12.3%        |
| e. Refused                         | 1.9%         | 4.7%         |





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