

SCR

1

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1</SUBJECT><COMM>SEDC29</COMM></TARGET>

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Senator Gary Stevens

Alaska State Legislature

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION I

"Relating to a Legislative Task Force on Civics Education."

SCR I creates a task force to carefully examine and improve awareness of the importance of civics education in our state. What is the condition of civics education in Alaska? What are other states doing? Given Alaska's current budget climate, how can we improve our approach to civics education in Alaska without adding to the cost of delivering it? These are questions worth exploring.

While most Americans agree on the importance of preparing young people for citizenship in a democracy, civic education has received less and less attention in schools over the past couple of decades. During that time, schools have focused their attention first on preparing students for college and jobs, and more recently on responding to increasing accountability demands, primarily in mathematics, reading, and writing. Experts believe a decline in civic engagement, such as the decline in voting rates among young voters since 18-year-olds were given the right to vote in 1972, may be a direct result of the decrease in emphasis placed on civics.

In one response to this decline in civic engagement, most states developed content standards in civics or government in the 1990s and early 2000s to ensure that students acquired a basic understanding of how government works, of the documents on which American democracy is based, and of basic democratic values. Unlike state efforts to improve instruction in the core academic disciplines, however, most states have not established statewide assessments aligned with their civics standards. A number of states recently have established legislative committees or task forces to examine their civic education practices and make recommendations to the legislature, the state education agency, and their public schools.

While many individuals and organizations have sought to address the poor condition of civic education, the problem remains acute. Strong state policies are needed to establish and reinforce the fact that preparation for civic life is equally as important as, and important for, preparation for higher education and careers. In fact, preparation for active citizenship was a foundational principle of public education in America from its beginning, and it is a principle that must be reaffirmed by each generation.

By passing SCR I, Alaska will join in with other states in an effort to restore attention to the importance of civics education in our schools.

I appreciate your consideration of this legislation.

Senate District R
Senator.Gary.Stevens@akleg.gov

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2015 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SCR 1
 Fiscal Note Number: _____
 () Publish Date: _____

Identifier: SCR1-LEG-COU-02-23-15
 Title: CIVICS EDUCATION TASK FORCE
 Sponsor: STEVENS
 Requester: (S) EDC

Department: Alaska Legislature
 Appropriation: Legislative Council
 Allocation: Council and Subcommittees
 OMB Component Number: 783

Expenditures/Revenues

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2016 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2016 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
OPERATING EXPENDITURES								
Personal Services								
Travel	5.9							
Services								
Commodities								
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits								
Miscellaneous								
Total Operating	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

1004 Gen Fund	5.9							
Total	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time								
Part-time								
Temporary								

Change in Revenues								
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Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2015) cost: 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2016) cost: 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency?
 If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:

Initial Version

Prepared By: <u>Jessica Geary, Finance Manager</u>	Phone: <u>(907)465-6626</u>
Division: <u>Legislative Affairs Agency</u>	Date: <u>02/23/2015 04:20 PM</u>
Approved By: <u>Pam Varni, Executive Director</u>	Date: <u>02/23/15</u>
Agency: <u>Legislative Affairs Agency</u>	

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA
2015 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. SCR 1

Analysis

SCR 1 creates an 11 member task force on civics education within the legislative branch. The sponsor intends for the task force to have 5 meetings in Anchorage during the interim. Members appointed to the task force could reside in the Anchorage bowl area to help keep travel and lodging costs to a minimum. Any members appointed to the task force that reside outside of the Anchorage area could participate telephonically. Likewise, any guest speakers or other experts testifying before the task force could also do so telephonically. Other agency representatives appointed to the task force would be asked to contribute their own respective funds to accommodate any travel costs associated with participating on the task force. Teleconference and printing costs will be absorbed within existing budgets. The task force will utilize existing legislative staff to fulfill its reporting work. A small, incidental travel budget is incorporated into this fiscal note to cover airfare, travel per diem and mileage.

29-LS0237N
Glover
3/4/15

CS FOR SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 1()
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY

Offered:
Referred:

Sponsor(s): SENATOR STEVENS

A RESOLUTION

1 **Relating to a legislative task force on civics education.**

2 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

3 **WHEREAS** research shows that one of the most significant ways schools can foster
4 youth civic engagement is by providing students with opportunities to engage in reflective
5 civic action through their classes and cocurricular and extracurricular activities; and

6 **WHEREAS**, rather than providing a single course in civics, educators should provide
7 civics learning activities from preschool through college, informed by best practices that
8 develop civics knowledge, including knowledge of our system of government and how it
9 works, and civics skills, including intellectual and participatory skills necessary for an active
10 civic life; and

11 **WHEREAS** opportunities for students to engage in real-world learning activities can
12 enhance the civic development of students and provide authentic learning experiences; and

13 **WHEREAS** research suggests that educators who include in their pedagogy a
14 component of civil service opportunities may better help students achieve greater levels of
15 academic success and increased motivation; and

16 **WHEREAS** the state can help ensure that schools provide civil service opportunities

1 for all students through the standards that schools set and the assessments and accountability
2 measures the state chooses;

3 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Alaska State Legislature that the Task Force on Civics
4 Education is established as a joint task force of the Alaska State Legislature for the purpose of
5 studying the current state of civics education and making recommendations for the
6 improvement of civics education for students in the state; and be it

7 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the duties of the task force include

- 8 (1) analyzing the current state of civics education in the state;
- 9 (2) analyzing current civics education laws in other jurisdictions;
- 10 (3) identifying best practices in civics education in other jurisdictions;
- 11 (4) studying and making recommendations about how to increase and improve
12 civics education in kindergarten through grade 12 in public schools in the state;
- 13 (5) making recommendations to the legislature relating to substantially
14 increasing civics literacy and the capacity of youth to obtain the requisite knowledge and
15 skills to be civically informed members of the public;
- 16 (6) making funding recommendations related to the task force's
17 recommendations to the legislature;
- 18 (7) submitting a report to the secretary of the senate and the chief clerk of the
19 house of representatives by January 19, 2016, summarizing the findings and recommendations
20 of the task force and notifying the members of the legislature that the report is available; and
21 be it

22 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force consists of 12 members as follows:

- 23 (1) three members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker of
24 the house of representatives, including one member of the minority organizational caucus;
- 25 (2) three members of the senate appointed by the president of the senate,
26 including one member of the minority organizational caucus;
- 27 (3) the commissioner of education and early development or the
28 commissioner's designee;
- 29 (4) five members of the public appointed jointly by the speaker of the house of
30 representatives and the president of the senate as follows:
 - 31 (A) one member of the National Education Association who is a

1 teacher with significant teaching experience in civics or social studies education;

2 (B) one member representing the Association of Alaska School
3 Boards;

4 (C) one member who is a student enrolled in good standing in a public
5 high school who will be a senior in the school on the date of the first meeting of the
6 task force; the student must demonstrate an interest in civics education and leadership;

7 (D) one member who is a judge or otherwise represents the judicial
8 branch of state government;

9 (E) one member representing the University of Alaska; and be it

10 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that

11 (1) the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the senate
12 shall jointly appoint the chair of the task force from among the legislative members of the task
13 force;

14 (2) a majority of the task force constitutes a quorum; a vacancy on the task
15 force shall be filled in the same manner as the original selection or appointment;

16 (3) the task force shall meet at the call of the chair;

17 (4) the task force may request data and other information from the Department
18 of Education and Early Development, school districts, and other state agencies; and be it

19 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the staff of the legislator who chairs the task force shall
20 provide administrative and other support to the task force; and be it

21 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that members of the task force serve without compensation
22 but are entitled to per diem and travel expenses authorized for boards and commissions under
23 AS 39.20.180; and be it

24 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force expires on June 30, 2016.

SCR1 - CIVICS Ed Task Force - Version N

March 5, 2015

Amendments – by Senator Stevens

Page 2, Line 22: The task force now has 12 members.

Page 2, Lines 23-26: The task force now has 3 representatives, and 3 senators, one each of would be in the minority caucus.

Page 3, Line 1: The NEA member would be a teacher with significant teaching experience in the area of civics education or social studies

Page 3, Lines 4-6: A member representing the media was deleted and replaced with a student, specifically a junior appointed in May, whom would presumably by a senior during the work timeline of the TF, enrolled in a public high school, in good academic standing, and with interest in leadership and civics ed.

Page 3, Lines 7-8: Deleted was representation by a civics ed-related non-profit, and instead replaced by one member who would be a judge or otherwise representing the judicial branch of Alaska state government.

Deleted was representation by the Superintendents/Administrators (ACSA), since school board representation was maintained.

TF Composition with these changes would then be:

3@Representatives, one in the minority

3@Senators, one in the minority

1@DEED Commissioner

1@NEA, Civics Teacher

1@The School Boards (AASB)

1@A Student

1@A Judge

1@The UnivAK

(12 members)

Students, Citizens and Our Nation's Future

Alaska State Senate Education Committee
Hearing on SCR1
February 26, 2015

Michael Poliakoff

American Council of Trustees and Alumni



ACTA
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

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?

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 Doggy Dog 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

It Gets Worse

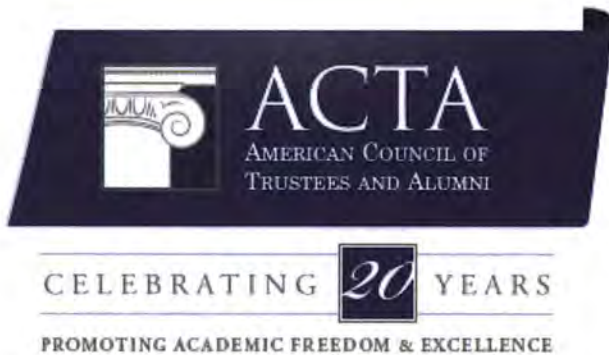
Results of a 2012 survey of recent college graduates
(GfK Custom Research North America)

How Long Are Terms for Members of Congress?	38.4% identified correctly
Who is Lady Gaga?	96.2% identified correctly

Cause and Effect ...

ACTA'S Study of the Core Curriculum:
What Will They Learn? TM

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



To be ignorant of history, wrote Cicero, is to be a child forever. Centuries later, Thomas Jefferson admonished our young republic that freedom and ignorance can never exist together.

American higher education has generally abandoned its obligation to prepare graduates who have the knowledge and understanding to take up meaningful roles in our free society. ACTA is working hard to change that.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Understanding the Problem

Our first task is to help the American public and higher education trustees and policymakers understand the extent of the problem. In 1999 ACTA commissioned the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut to survey seniors at the nation's 55 most prestigious colleges and universities to see if they could answer basic questions on the nation's history. These questions were typical of a standard high school curriculum, many of them replicating questions from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The shocking results—81% of these seniors from elite institutions received the equivalent of a “D” or “F”—would soon reverberate through the U.S. Capitol itself.

"History is a discipline in decline. There is a profound ignorance not only among students but among their teachers as well. This study confirms that."

— **Oscar Handlin, University Professor Emeritus at Harvard University**

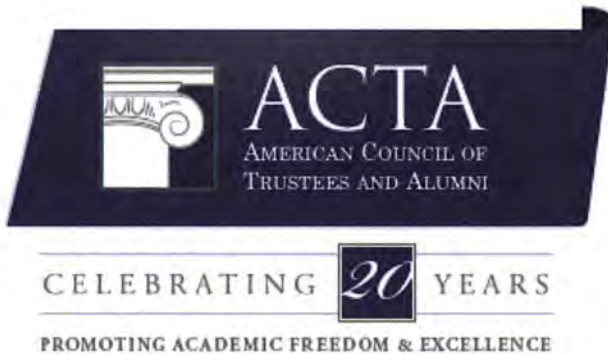
On President's Day, February 21, 2000, ACTA reported the findings in its report, *[Losing America's Memory. Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century.](#)* with the endorsement of historian David McCullough. Congress moved quickly. On June 30 of that year, [Concurrent Resolution 129](#), introduced by Senator Joseph Lieberman on behalf of Senators Gorton, Smith, Cleland, Byrd, Conrad, Bennett, and Grams, and unanimously adopted, took note of ACTA's survey. The Concurrent Resolution called for boards of trustees and college administrators, as well as state officials responsible for public higher education, to review their standards and add requirements for the study of United States history.

What Will They Learn?™ Project

ACTA continues to monitor the state of historical knowledge among college students. The What Will They Learn?™ project takes note of which schools require American history or government and which do not. In 2012, we commissioned Gfk Roper OmniTel to [survey college graduates](#) again. Unfortunately, the findings were as dismal as the initial survey. Only 17% of college graduates could identify Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as the source of the phrase, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people." Only 20% could identify James Madison as the "Father of the Constitution." Nearly two-thirds were unaware that the term of a U.S. Senator is six years, and 43% could not even identify the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Engaging the Public, Trustees, and Policymakers

In 2012, ACTA testified before the U.S. Congress, endorsing the restoration of a day of commemoration on George Washington's actual birthday. In 2008, ACTA coordinated the publication and release of *E Pluribus Unum*, a report by The Bradley Project designed to start a conversation about America's National Identity. The product of a two-year study involving a number of our nation's leading academics, public figures, journalists, educators and policy experts, it has attracted hundreds of thousands of viewers to its [website](#). In 2003, with support from the Daniels Foundation, ACTA quickly responded to a call from civic leaders and scholars at the White House Forum on American History, Civics, and Service and issued [*We the People, A Resource Guide to Promoting Historical Literacy for Governors, Legislators, Teachers, and Citizens*](#). Through op-eds and newspaper opinion pieces, ACTA reminds the public of all that our nation loses if it forgets its past. We are in constant contact with trustees, making them aware of the need to ensure a general education requirement for all students that ensures their basic understanding of this nation and its free institutions. And little by little, colleges and universities are rising to the challenge.



Americans' Limited Knowledge of the Roosevelts Shows Need for Colleges to Restore American History

39% of Americans Don't Know Franklin D. Roosevelt was President During World War II

September 17, 2014

Only 18% of Colleges Require Even a Single Course in American History or Government

WASHINGTON, DC—As Ken Burns' documentary "The Roosevelts: An Intimate History" airs this week, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni today released [a survey](#) that shows how little Americans know about Theodore and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

According to the study, 39% of Americans don't know Franklin D. Roosevelt was president during World War II; 59% don't know Theodore Roosevelt had a role in the construction of the Panama Canal. College graduates didn't do much better on the survey. Nearly half didn't know Teddy Roosevelt had a major role in the Panama Canal; one-third didn't know FDR spearheaded the New Deal and almost three in five didn't know he was elected four times. Examine the full survey [here](#).

The survey underscores a problem of historical amnesia made worse by the weak curriculum of many American colleges and universities. According to the *What Will They Learn?*TM study, only 18% of institutions require students to take a course in American history or government.

This survey is the latest in a series conducted by GfK Custom Research. Previous studies have included [a 2014 survey](#) on D-Day that found that a quarter of Americans don't know D-Day occurred during World War II, and [a 2012 survey](#) that found only 57% of college graduates know John Roberts is the chief justice of the United States.

CONTACT:

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JOE FOSS INSTITUTE



CIVICS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

100 Facts Every High School Student Should Know

Restoring civics education and
ensuring that all High School graduates
are ready for active, engaged citizenship.

The Goal: Preparing for Active & Engaged Citizenship

The Strategy: The Civics Education Initiative



CIVICS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

100 Facts Every High School Student Should Know

The Joe Foss Institute was established:

To educate our youth on the importance of America's unique freedoms, and
To to inspire them to public service.

The Civics Education Initiative is a project of the Joe Foss Institute, with the goal of passing legislation in all 50 states by September 17, 2017 – the 230th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution.

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, from the United States Citizenship Civics Test – *the test all new US citizens must pass.*

The Civics Education Initiative is a first step to ensure all students are taught basic civics about how our government works, and who we are as a nation...things every student should know to be ready for active, engaged citizenship.

Nationwide Voter Survey

Polling Methodology



The Joe Foss Institute commissioned a nationwide survey conducted by Wilson Perkins Allen Opinion Research (WPA)

- Fielded April 22-24, 2014
- N= 804 Likely Voters
- MoE=+/- 3.5% in 95 out of 100 cases.

WPA selected a random sample of likely voters nationwide using Random Digit Dialing. The sample for this survey was stratified based on geography, age, gender, ethnicity, and education.

The exact language for the two questions highlighted in this presentation were:

“Some have proposed that high school students must pass a civics test in order to graduate. Would you vote yes or no on an initiative to require high school students to pass the same civics exam that all immigrants must pass to become US citizens, in order to graduate?”

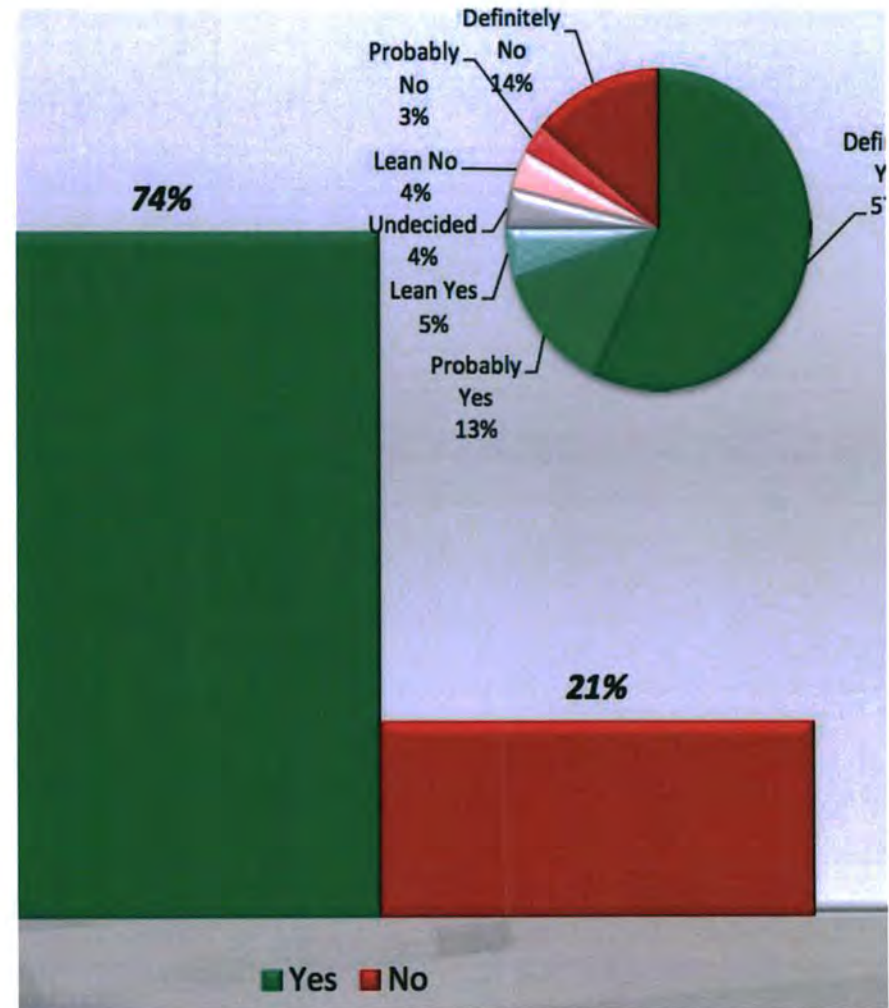
“If you knew that a legislator from your state supported a proposal like this, would you be ROTATE more likely or less likely to vote for them?”

The Civics Education Initiative

Overwhelmingly Supported by Voters

Overall 74% of voters support the Civics Education Initiative. Every demographic group tested shows support at or above 60%, with 57% of all voters saying "Definitely Yes." Yes/No differential is +53!

	YES	NO	Diff
All	74%	21%	+53
Men	78%	19%	+59
Women	71%	24%	+47
Republican	84%	13%	+71
Independent	75%	21%	+54
Democrat	68%	27%	+41
Romney Voters	81%	16%	+65
Obama Voters	69%	25%	+44
White	76%	20%	+56
Hispanic	76%	22%	+54
African American	60%	32%	+28
West	81%	14%	+67
South	73%	22%	+51
Midwest	74%	22%	+52
North East	68%	28%	+40

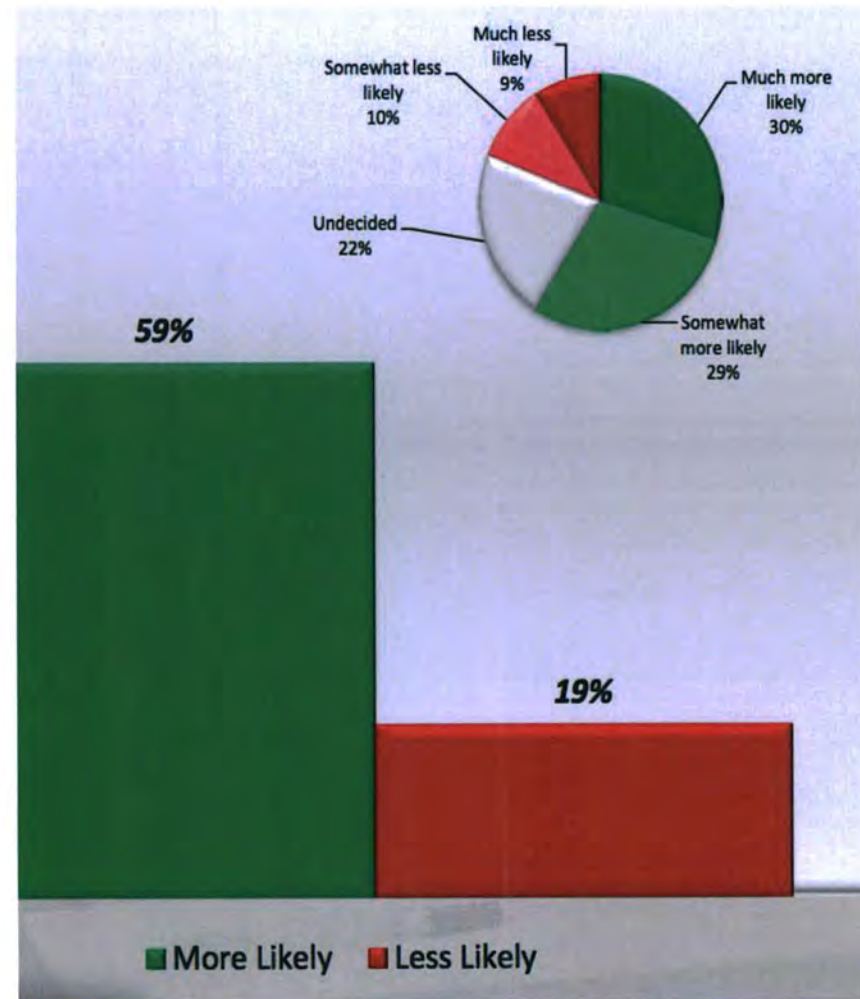


The Civics Education Initiative

Voters Much More Likely to Vote for Supportive Legislators

Voters are overwhelmingly much more likely to support a Legislator that backs the Civics Education Initiative. Overall, the support/oppose factor is nearly 4-to-1.

	More Likely	Less Likely	Diff
All	60%	16%	+44
Men	62%	15%	+47
Women	59%	18%	+41
Republican	71%	8%	+63
Independent	62%	17%	+45
Democrat	53%	21%	+32
Romney Voters	68%	12%	+56
Obama Voters	55%	19%	+36
White	64%	15%	+49
Hispanic	57%	16%	+41
African American	49%	28%	+21
West	60%	12%	+48
South	64%	17%	+47
Midwest	57%	17%	+40
North East	59%	19%	+40



The Civics Education Initiative

Targeting 15 States, with a Goal of Passage in 10 in 2015

Our goal is passage in all 50 States by September 17, 2017 – the 230th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution.

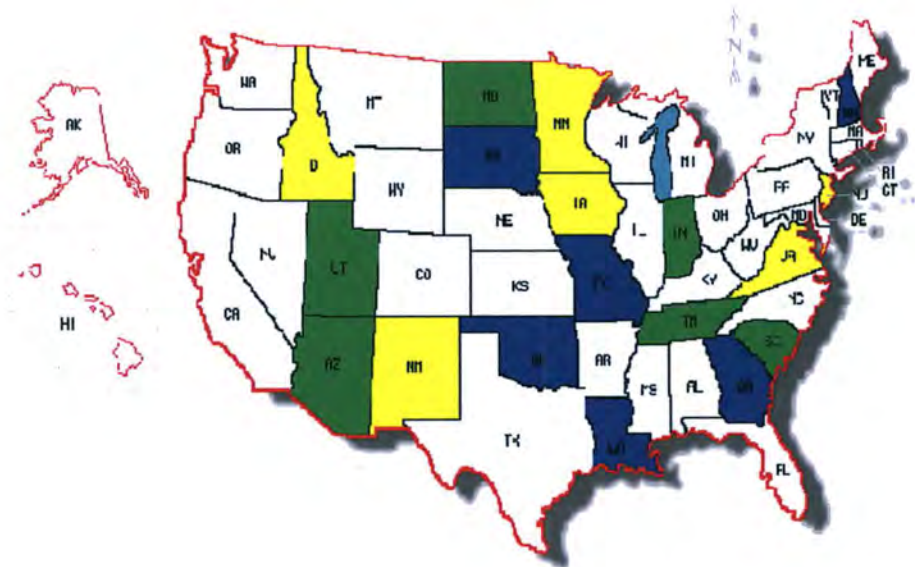
For 2015, we will target 15 states with the goal of passage in 10 states by legislative enactment.

For 2016, we will target 25 states with the goal of passage in 20 states, including passage at the ballot box in at least one state, by initiative or legislative referral.

For 2017, we will target the remaining states for legislative enactment.

Civics Education Initiative 2015

- - Gov (10)
- - Gov (6)
- - Ref (5)



Source: dynamax.com



JOE FOSS INSTITUTE



CIVICS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

100 Facts Every High School Student Should Know

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(563.3677) 480.348.0316
Frank Riggs, President & CEO
Sam Stone, Executive Director



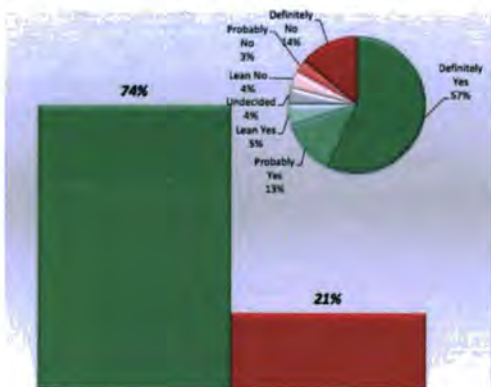
CIVICS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

100 Facts Every High School Student Should Know

Restoring civics education and ensuring that all High School graduates are ready for active, engaged citizenship.

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 U.S. history and civics taken from the United States Citizenship Civics Test – ***the test all immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship must pass.*** Yet, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 24 percent of U.S. high school students are proficient in civics, and studies by the Annenberg Foundation show that a third of U.S. citizens can't name even one branch of our federal government. That's why the **Joe Foss Institute** created **The Civics Education Initiative**.

The Civics Education Initiative legislation allows individual schools to administer the test in a way the school deems as adequate to ensure the requirements are followed. Students may take the test any time during their high school careers and may take the test as many times as necessary to pass. By using this well---established test and the study materials that are already easily available online and for free, CEI legislation has next to no implementation costs.



Overall, 74% of voters support the **Civics Education Initiative**. Every demographic group tested shows support at or above 60%, with 57% of all voters saying *"Definitely Yes!"*

	YES	NO	+/- Difference
All	74%	21%	+53
Men	78%	19%	+59
Women	71%	24%	+47
Republican	84%	13%	+71
Independent	75%	21%	+54
Democrat	68%	27%	+41
White	76%	20%	+56
Hispanic	76%	22%	+54
African American	60%	32%	+28

The Civics Education Initiative is a first step to ensure all students are taught basic civics about how our government works, and who we are as a nation...things every student should know to be ready for active, engaged citizenship.



The Civics Education Initiative National Board of Advisors includes former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Pulitzer winning journalist Carl Bernstein and award winning actor Joe Mantegna.

The Civics Education Initiative is a project of the Joe Foss Institute, with the goal of passing legislation in all 50 states by September 17, 2017 – the 230th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution.

For further information please contact:

Executive Director Sam Stone at 480-745-8237 or Sam@CivicsEducationInitiative.com

www.CivicsEducationInitiative.com



CIVICS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

100 Facts Every High School Student Should Know

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, 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.*

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 September 17th 2017 - the 230th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution.*



The Civics Proficiency Initiative will set as a requirement for High School graduation that students must pass the United States Citizenship Civics Test. Passage of this test – *in English* – is required for all new American Citizens. A score of 60% or greater is required for passage.

As of December 2013, 92% of immigrants applying for United States citizenship passed the test.

But a study conducted in Arizona by the Goldwater Institute showed only 4% of High School students passing the test. In Oklahoma, a study conducted by the Oklahoma Council for Public Affairs showed less than 3% of High School students passing the test.

Shouldn't our High School graduates know as much about basic American civics as we require immigrants applying for United States citizenship to know about America?

Can you pass the test?

Take the test below and see how well you know basic American civics.

United States Citizenship Civics Test

100 Questions in Three Parts

PART ONE: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

A: Principles of American Democracy

1. What is the supreme law of the land?
2. What does the Constitution do?
3. The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?
4. What is an amendment?
5. What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution?
6. What is one right or freedom from the First Amendment?
7. How many amendments does the Constitution have?
8. What did the Declaration of Independence do?
9. What are two rights in the Declaration of Independence?
10. What is freedom of religion?
11. What is the economic system in the United States?
12. What is the "rule of law"?

B: System of Government

13. Name one branch or part of the government.
14. What stops one branch of government from becoming too powerful?
15. Who is in charge of the executive branch?
16. Who makes federal laws?
17. What are the two parts of the U.S. Congress?

18. How many U.S. Senators are there?
19. We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years?
20. Who is one of your state's U.S. Senators now?
21. The House of Representatives has how many voting members?
22. We elect a U.S. Representative for how many years?
23. Name your U.S. Representative.
24. Who does a U.S. Senator represent?
25. Why do some states have more Representatives than other states?
26. We elect a President for how many years?
27. In what month do we vote for President?
28. What is the name of the President of the United States now?
29. What is the name of the Vice President of the United States now?
30. If the President can no longer serve, who becomes President?
31. If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?
32. Who is the Commander in Chief of the military?
33. Who signs bills to become laws?
34. Who vetoes bills?
35. What does the President's Cabinet do?
36. What are two Cabinet-level positions?
37. What does the judicial branch do?
38. What is the highest court in the United States?
39. How many justices are on the Supreme Court?
40. Who is the Chief Justice of the United States now?
41. Under our Constitution, some powers belong to

- the federal government. What is one power of the federal government?
42. Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the states. What is one power of the states?
 43. Who is the Governor of your state now?
 44. What is the capital of your state?
 45. What are the two major political parties in the United States?
 46. What is the political party of the President now?
 47. What is the name of the Speaker of the House of Representatives now?

C: Rights and Responsibilities

48. There are four amendments to the Constitution about who can vote. Describe one of them.
49. What is one responsibility that is only for United States citizens?
50. Name one right only for United States citizens.
51. What are two rights of everyone living in the United States?
52. What do we show loyalty to when we say the Pledge of Allegiance?
53. What is one promise you make when you become a United States citizen?
54. How old do citizens have to be to vote for President?
55. What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?
56. When is the last day you can send in federal income tax forms?
57. When must all men register for the Selective Service?

PART TWO: AMERICAN HISTORY

A: Colonial Period and Independence

58. What is one reason colonists came to America?
59. Who lived in America before the Europeans arrived?
60. What group of people was taken to America and sold as slaves?
61. Why did the colonists fight the British?
62. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
63. When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?
64. There were 13 original states. Name three.
65. What happened at the Constitutional Convention?
66. When was the Constitution written?
67. The Federalist Papers supported the passage of the U.S. Constitution. Name one of the writers.
68. What is one thing Benjamin Franklin is famous for?
69. Who is the "Father of Our Country?"
70. Who was the first President?

B. The 1800's

71. What territory did the United States buy from

- France in 1803?
72. Name one war fought by the United States in the 1800s.
73. Name the U.S. war between the North and the South.
74. Name one problem that led to the Civil War.
75. What was one important thing that Abraham Lincoln did?
76. What did the Emancipation Proclamation do?
77. What did Susan B. Anthony do?

C: Recent American History and Other Important Historical Information

78. Name one war fought by the United States in the 1900s.
79. Who was President during World War I?
80. Who was President during the Great Depression and World War II?
81. Who did the United States fight in World War II?
82. Before he was President, Eisenhower was a general. What war was he in?
83. During the Cold War, what was the main concern of the United States?
84. What movement tried to end racial discrimination?
85. What did Martin Luther King, Jr. do?
86. What major event happened on September 11, 2001, in the United States?
87. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States.

PART THREE: INTEGRATED CIVICS

A: Geography

88. Name one of the two longest rivers in the United States.
89. What ocean is on the West Coast of the United States?
90. What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?
91. Name one U.S. territory.
92. Name one state that borders Canada.
93. Name one state that borders Mexico.
94. What is the capital of the United States?
95. Where is the Statue of Liberty?

B: Symbols

96. Why does the flag have 13 stripes?
97. Why does the flag have 50 stars?
98. What is the name of the national anthem?

C: Holidays

99. When do we celebrate Independence Day?
100. Name two national U.S. holidays.

From: The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania

Americans know surprisingly little about their government, survey finds

Wednesday, September 17th, 2014

PHILADELPHIA – Americans show great uncertainty when it comes to answering basic questions about how their government works, a national survey conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania has found.

The survey of 1,416 adults, released for Constitution Day (Sept. 17) in conjunction with the launch of the [Civics Renewal Network](#), found that:

- While little more than a third of respondents (36 percent) could name all three branches of the U.S. government, just as many (35 percent) could not name a single one.
- Just over a quarter of Americans (27 percent) know it takes a two-thirds vote of the House and Senate to override a presidential veto.
- One in five Americans (21 percent) incorrectly thinks that a 5-4 Supreme Court decision is sent back to Congress for reconsideration.

“Although surveys reflect disapproval of the way Congress, the President and the Supreme Court are conducting their affairs, the Annenberg survey demonstrates that many know surprisingly little about these branches of government,” said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the [Annenberg Public Policy Center](#) (APPC). “This survey offers dramatic evidence of the need for more and better civics education.”

The Civics Renewal Network

To address the problem, APPC and 25 other nonpartisan organizations, including the [Library of Congress](#), the [National Constitution Center](#), the [U.S. Courts](#), the [National Archives](#), and the [Newseum](#), announced the launch of the [Civics Renewal Network](#), a unique partnership among some of the nation’s leaders in civics education. The network offers free, high-quality resources for teachers through the one-stop website www.civicsrenewalnetwork.org.

The Civics Renewal Network is celebrating Constitution Day with coast-to-coast activities and running public service ads in some major television markets encouraging viewers to learn about the Constitution. The ads can be seen on YouTube [here](#) and [here](#).

In a first, the U.S. Courts are holding [27 naturalization ceremonies](#) at iconic sites from Maine to Alaska. Students at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia and more than 550 schools nationwide will take the “[Preamble Challenge](#),” reciting the 52-word Preamble to the Constitution. An [American Academy of Arts & Sciences](#) symposium at the [Newseum’s](#) Knight Conference Center in Washington, D.C., will examine the role of civics in American life, followed by a keynote address from new National Endowment for the Humanities chairman William “Bro” Adams. Those events will be video-streamed by the Academy [here](#). The full day’s schedule can be found on the APPC site [here](#). A 10:30 a.m. news conference by the Civics Renewal Network also will be video-streamed [on its site](#).

Most Americans do not know which parties control the House and Senate

The study also found that more than half of Americans do not know which party controls the House and Senate:

- Asked which party has the most members in the House of Representatives, 38 percent said they knew the Republicans are the majority, but 17 percent responded the Democrats, and 44 percent reported that they did not know (up from 27 percent who said they did not know in 2011).
- Asked which party controls the Senate, 38 percent correctly said the Democrats, 20 percent said the Republicans, and 42 percent said they did not know (also up from 27 percent who said they did not know in 2011).

For the complete release on the survey, [click here](#). For additional information on methodology and data, [click here](#).

Link: <http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/americans-know-surprisingly-little-about-their-government-survey-finds/>

Facts About Civic & Political Literacy In America

How Informed Are American Citizens? -- What The Research Says --

Over the last ten years or so, numerous research studies and polls have produced very similar data about what Americans know about how government works, about the big issues of our time and the policies that address them, about where politicians stand on those issues and policies, and the historical knowledge needed to make wise judgments about these things. The results serve as indelible testimony to the depth of the civic and political literacy problem America faces.

In 2005, the Knight Foundation commissioned one of the largest studies -- a two year, million dollar research project. Summing up the results, then president Hodding Carter III said: "These results are not only disturbing; they are dangerous."

"Americans Fail The Test Of Civic Literacy" screamed the headline of a 2008 report from the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. "It can truly be said we are suffering from an epidemic of civic ignorance," sums up Lt. General Josiah Bunting III, chairman of the group's National Civic Literacy Board. ISI is a conservative-leaning organization, but their study is comprehensive and objective. Regardless, the results are the same whether the source leans left, right, or otherwise.

Here are some bullet points from various studies in recent years. Links to the full reports are below.

- 64% of Americans can't name the three branches of government, or describe what they do.
- most of us don't know which party controls Congress at any given time.
- half can't describe the difference between liberals and conservatives
- most can't name their own members or Congress or their US Senators
- nearly half don't know that states have 2 Senators
- 54% cannot name a single Supreme Court Justice
- 41% cannot identify the Speaker of the House -- even in a multiple-choice question.
- only a bare majority can name even one basic purpose of the Constitution
- more citizens can name "American Idol" judges than can name the 1st Amendment rights
- 39% of us cannot name any of the freedoms in the 1st Amendment
- only one in 1000 can name all five rights in the 1st Amendment
- 35% feel the First Amendment goes too far. An additional 21% are unsure
- almost half think the president has the authority to suspend the U.S. Constitution
- 60% believe he can appoint judges to the federal courts without the approval of the Senate
- 50% feel newspapers should not be allowed to publish stories without government approval
- only 34% know that it's Congress that declares war
- only 35% know that Congress can override a presidential veto
- for those under age 40, the number rises to 54%

Report cards like these are just incredible in a nation that claims to value education so highly. And these are just civics-101 questions. It only gets worse when measuring knowledge levels about actual issues and public policies that affect not only the nation, but the quality of our own individual lives, and the lives of our families.

Here are just a few more tip of the iceberg tidbits regarding our grasp of issues, current events, and relevant history:

- 40% of us cannot name a single fossil fuel
- nearly half can't name a renewable energy source
- 55% believe that the Constitution establishes a Christian nation
- 30% cannot identify the Holocaust
- only one in seven young people can find Iraq on a map
- as late as 2007, 41% still believed Saddam Hussein was directly involved in 9/11
- 62% believe that the making up of stories is a widespread problem in the news media

And in foreign affairs, our knowledge levels drop even further through the floor. The Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad found that "America's ignorance of the world is a national liability." Others consider it an outright national security threat.

The bottom line is the stark reality that the vast majority of Americans are willfully ignorant about the issues, policies, politicians, history, and structure of government needed for informed participation in democracy. And this is a problem that is even more critical today, when American democracy needs all the wisdom we can get.

The good news is that, for most of us, our ignorance is by choice -- we have chosen not to stay informed. Meaning that, in theory, there's a simple remedy -- make a different choice.

This point can't be emphasized enough. We are not a stupid people. Far from it. We're actually more educated than any generation in history. But we simply haven't been paying attention as citizens. And that's true no matter our party identification, or age, or race, or gender, or economic status. In an era when nearly every major newspaper and newsmagazine and political website is available online for free – it's hard to argue there's any excuse anymore. We all lead busy lives, but life's about setting priorities. Let's hope more of us re-set our civic priorities in the years ahead.

"Song Of A Citizen" will be making that case over the next few years. We need your help to ensure that America is listening.

For more info about the state of the American political mind, check out the following:

Political Knowledge Research Studies and Polls -- 1997 to 2011

(in descending chronological order)

- [Department of Education](#) - May 2011 "What young Americans know about Civics "
- [How Dumb Are We?](#) - March 2011 - Newsweek – "The Country's Future Is Imperiled By Our Ignorance"
- [Political Knowledge Update](#) - March, 2011 – "Pew Research Center for the People & The Press"
- [Enlightened Citizenship](#) – 2011 – "Intercollegiate Studies Institute"
- [Pew Research Center](#) -- January 2010 – "Political News IQ Update"
- [The Shaping of the American Mind](#) – 2010 – "Intercollegiate Studies Institute"
- [First Amendment Center](#) – 2009 – "State of the First Amendment "
- [Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs](#) -- Sept. 2009 – "75% of Oklahoma High School Students Can't Name the First President of the U.S."
- [Public Agenda](#) -- Aug. '09 – "What The Public Knows About Energy"
- [Penn. Schoen and Berland Associates](#) -- June 2009 – "C-SPAN Supreme Court Survey about citizen knowledge of the Supreme Court"
- [Intercollegiate Studies Institute](#) -- American Civic Literacy Program – 2008 – "Americans Fail The Test Of Civic Literacy"
- [National Endowment for the Arts](#) -- Nov. 2007 – "Study links declines in reading with poorer academic and social outcomes"
- [Annenberg Public Policy Center](#) -- Oct. 2007 – "Study on Judicial Elections reveal facts about low public knowledge of Supreme Court"
- [Newsweek](#) -- Sept. 2007 – Dunces-Cap Nation survey called "What Do We Know?"
- [Pew Research Center for the People & The Press](#) -- April 2007 – "Public Knowledge of Current Affairs Little Changed by News & Information Revolutions"
- [Knight Foundation -- Future Of The First Amendment](#) "Survey Finds First Amendment Is Being Left Behind in U.S. High Schools"
- [First Amendment Center](#) – 2007 – "Americans' Views Mixed on Basic Freedoms"
- [Drum Major Institute](#) -- Sept. 2006 – "How Civic Education Died -- and why we need it back"
- [Zogby International](#) -- Aug. 2006 – "More Americans Know Snow White's Dwarfs Than Supreme Court Judges"
- [McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum](#) -- March 2006 – "Americans' Awareness of First Amendment Freedoms"
- [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) – 2006 – "Reports on what students know about civics"
- [The Nation's Civic Report Card](#) – 2006 –
- [Program on International Policy Attitudes \(PIPA\)](#) -- Oct. 2003 – "Misperceptions, The Media, and the Iraq War"
- [Columbia University Law School study](#) -- May, 2002 – "What Americans Don't Know About Our Constitution--and Why It Matters"
- [National Constitution Center](#) – 1997 – "Startling Lack of Constitutional Knowledge"



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NEWS

Polling Demonstrates Inconsistent Public Knowledge About Election Policy

January 15, 2014

Election Initiatives

[Return to Election Data Dispatches](#)

Polling conducted by Public Opinion Strategies and the Mellman Group for The Pew Charitable Trusts indicates that many voters are not well-informed about election policies. Early voting is the area in which survey respondents demonstrated the most accurate knowledge. Of particular note, voters in states that allow Election Day registration knew more about their registration options than those in states that do not allow it.

Among registered voters living in states with early voting:

- 11 percent did not realize that their state offered the option of voting early.
- 11 percent were unsure whether early voting was available in their state.

Among registered voters living in states where no excuse is necessary to request an absentee ballot:

- 10 percent believed that they would need to provide an excuse to vote absentee.

- 30 percent did not know whether no-excuse absentee voting was allowed in their state.

In states that allow citizens to register and vote at the polls on Election Day:

- 16 percent believed their state did not allow Election Day registration.
- 14 percent did not know whether Election Day registration was offered in their state.

In states that do not allow voters to register on Election Day:

- 26 percent thought that they could register and vote on Election Day.
- 30 percent did not know whether Election Day registration was allowed.

These data come from a national sample of 1,001 registered voters contacted Sept. 18-26, 2013. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.10 percentage points.

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1-in-10 Americans don't give a hoot about politics

July 7, 2014 By [George Gao](#)

As Republicans and Democrats gear up for midterm elections this November, there's one group of Americans that is paying very little, if any, attention to the whole ordeal.

Overall, 10% of Americans are what we call Bystanders, or the politically disengaged, according to Pew Research Center's [Political Typology report](#). None of this cohort say they're registered to vote, and none say they follow government and public affairs most of the time (this compares with 48% of Americans overall). Virtually all of this group (96%) say they've never contributed money to a candidate running for public office.

In our typology, we [categorized Americans](#) into eight groups—among them, Solid Liberals and Steadfast Conservatives—using [23 questions](#) about a wide range of political values. Most of the analysis is focused on seven main groups in the political typology that are defined by these political values. But the Bystanders, defined by their lack of political engagement, give a glimpse of the views of those on the political sidelines. (Note: For that reason, it is not possible in our [online quiz](#) to be categorized as a Bystander.)

Who are the political typology groups?

While Bystanders view the Democratic Party more favorably than the GOP, they have a mix of liberal and conservative attitudes. They are sympathetic to the plight of the poor, but as many say that government aid to the poor does more harm than good as vice versa. They express fairly liberal views on homosexuality and same-sex marriage, but 54% say abortion should be illegal in all or most cases.

Bystanders are young (38% are under 30), and nearly a third (32%) are Hispanic. A third of Bystanders are foreign born, a higher share than any of the other typology groups, including 29% total who are not citizens.

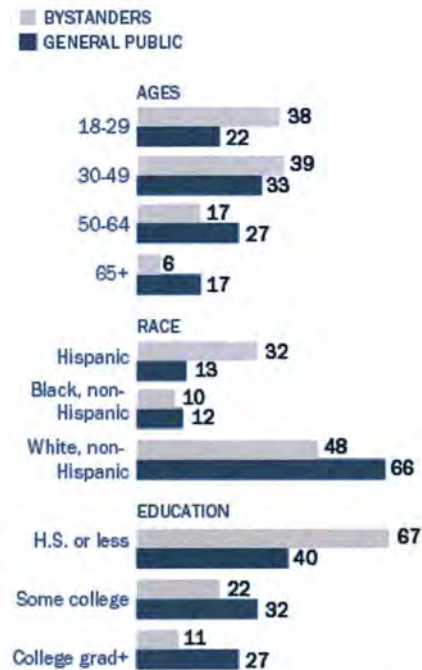
Asked about their interest in a number of topics, 73% of Bystanders say they have no interest in government and politics, and two-thirds (66%) say they are not interested in business and finance. So what topics do interest them? Health, science and celebrities: 64% of Bystanders are interested in celebrities and entertainment (vs. 46% of the public). And, in a sign of their youth, they are drawn to video games: 35% call themselves a “video or computer gamer” (vs. 21% of the public).

In our survey, Bystanders were often more likely than other political cohorts to answer “don't know,” to say they've “never heard of” the topic in question or to refuse to answer questions altogether.

What's your political typology? Take [our quiz](#) to find out.

A Profile of Political Bystanders

Percent who are...



Note: Bystanders are not registered to vote, say they seldom or never vote and do not follow government and public affairs most of the time. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Don't know responses not shown. Other/Mixed race not shown.

Source: 2014 Political Typology

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