

The Civics Secures Democracy Act

FACT vs. FICTION

Fiction:

The Act creates a mandated Federal curriculum and forces State and Local School Districts to adopt that uniform 'national curriculum.'

Fact:

The Act specifically prohibits the Federal Department of Education from developing or requiring any American history and civics curriculum. In fact, the Act leaves all decisions on curriculum, what to teach and how to teach, to state and local education policymakers and their communities.

Fiction:

The Act is part of a partisan agenda designed to usurp state and local policymakers authority.

Fact:

The Act was introduced by bipartisan congressional leaders, Rep. Rosa DeLauro, (D-CT), Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK), Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) and Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE). The act does not mention any specific curriculum or pedagogy, leaving all curricular decisions to state and local education policymakers.

Fiction:

Civics and history education already receive sufficient Federal level investment, there is no need to invest more.

Fact:

Current Federal level investment in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education is approximately \$54. per enrolled school child. Current Federal level investment in American history and civic education is 5 Cents per enrolled school child.

Fiction:

The Act will force schools to teach "Action Civics" or "Critical Race Theory."

Fact:

The terms "action civics" and "critical race theory" do not appear anywhere in the Act. The Act prohibits the Federal government from proscribing any curriculum, pedagogy or curricular approach, leaving all decisions on what and how to teach to states and local school districts.

Fiction:

The Act will overload schools with standardized testing and detracts from actual learning in the classroom.

Fact:

The Act is not forcing schools to administer any new tests. It is merely expanding current national diagnostic testing (NAEPs in American History and Civics and Government) to provide state and local policymakers with data on how well their schools are performing in these subjects as is now done for Math and English education.

The Theory Behind the Civics Secures Democracy Act

The major theory behind the Civics Secures Democracy Act (HR.1814 and S.879) is replicating for American history and civic education, what has been done over the past 30 plus years for STEM and English language arts education, with bipartisan support. Using Federal investments to empower local school districts and states to vastly improve their approach to civics and history, at a much lower cost than what has been appropriated for STEM and English.

Currently, the Federal level invests nearly \$3Billion a year in STEM education programs alone. While we do not begrudge that investment, it has been a significant reason for the decline in time and resources for civics and history. That level of investment combined with the Federally required testing in STEM and English (and lack thereof in civics & history) has sent the message to local school districts and states that civics and history are just not that important and they have reacted accordingly. Surely investing in high quality civic learning is just as important to the future of our Republic as investing in STEM! The Federal government spends over \$2Billion a year to promote democracy abroad. Surely spending one half that amount promoting (small d) democracy at home is as worthy of an investment.

While there are a few onetime expenditures in the Civics Secures Democracy Act (the increase in the endowments of the James Madison Memorial and Truman Fellowship programs) the legislation calls for \$1Billion a year for 5 years, assuming subsequent appropriations. This is roughly 1/3rd of the current annual Federal appropriations for STEM education and 1/2 of promotion of democracy abroad. Our rationale is that after five years, the states will have gotten the message that American history and civics are just as important as STEM and English, will have used the Federal investments to strengthen and improve their approach to the subjects and will have increased state and local investment accordingly. The on-going expense to conduct the expanded NAEPs would be folded into the US Department of Education's annual budget.

65% of the suggested funding goes to the states (going up to 70+% in years 2-5) with 90% of that being regranted to local school districts. We wanted to be incredibly careful not to be too prescriptive on how local school districts could use the funds, other than they must be used to strengthen and improve teaching of American history and civics. One school district might decide what they needed was professional development for all its history and civics teachers, that would be allowable; another district might determine they needed to invest in on-line interactive lessons on the philosophy behind the Founding Period and Founding documents, using original source material, that would also be allowable. We leave the essential decisions on what to teach, how to teach and when to teach, to local school districts and the states, while providing the necessary resources for the to improve their American history and civics offerings.

How will we know that these Federal investments are working? Through the results of the NAEP Report Cards in American History and Civics, through those being done more regularly and with a sufficient sample size to allow state level data to be provided, so the policymakers of every state can see for themselves how well their state's schools are performing in these critical subjects. And we suspect several states will reinstate or instate their own testing in American history and civics providing more proof points.