

The Civics Secures Democracy Act of 2021

Introduced in the US House of Representatives by: Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT),
Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK) and Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)

Introduced in the US Senate by: Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE) and Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)

The de-emphasis of civic and American history education in our nation's schools has contributed to a lack of understanding of the fundamental principles and practices of our republican system of government. This comprehensive legislation responds to the threat to American democracy by enhancing the elements of state and local response that research suggests are most effective in teaching and engaging all students in civics, including: grants to state and local education agencies; competitive awards to non-profit developers of evidence-based approaches to instruction; professional development for teachers; expanding research into effective practices; diversifying the teaching corps and expanding the number of master teachers in American history and civics; and providing disaggregated data to evaluate progress through the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The Act specifically prohibits use of the funds for the development of any national curriculum in American history or civic education.

Specifically, the Act provides for:

Grants to States to support education in American civics and history. States receiving a grant must agree to participate in the NAEPs in civics and history and to the public release of disaggregated NAEP performance data. States that receive grants must use not less than 95% of the funds to make **subgrants to school districts** to assist local education agencies in carrying out programs to improve the achievement of elementary and secondary school students in the fields of American civics and history. Priority will be given to grant proposals proposing to serve under-served, inner-city, rural and majority minority school populations.

Support for qualified nonprofit organizations, through competitive grants, to assist such organizations in developing or expanding access to evidence-based curricula, instructional models, and other educational programs to enhance student knowledge and achievement in American civics and history in elementary schools and secondary schools. Priority will be given to grant proposals proposing to serve under-served, inner-city, rural and majority minority school populations.

Resources for institutions of higher education, on a competitive basis, to assist such institutions in developing and implementing programs to train elementary and secondary school teachers in methods for instructing and engaging students in American civics and history. Priority shall be given to applications proposing to address the specific needs of teachers working with traditionally underserved students, including rural and inner-city urban students and English learners. Thirty-five percent of these funds are designated for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and Tribal Institutions of Higher Education.

Qualified **researchers** may also receive competitive grants to research and evaluate (1) elementary and secondary school students' knowledge of American civics and history; and (2) effective instructional practices and educator professional development in the fields of American civics and history.

The bill establishes a new fellowship program to **diversify the American History and Civics teaching corps** through the creation of the **Prince Hall Fellowship** and provides additional assistance to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of the **James Madison Memorial** and **Harry Truman Fellowship** Programs.

The legislation also contains the provisions of the **USA Civics Act of 2020** (introduced by Sens. Coons and Cornyn, Reps. Cole and Blumenauer) which updates provisions of the Higher Education Act that provide support for colleges and universities to support teacher professional development and other activities.

This Bill also directs the National Assessment Governing Board and the US Department of Education to Conduct the **National Assessments of Educational Progress (NAEP)** tests in American History and Civics and Government, using a methodology sufficient to provide accurate, disaggregated, statistically significant State level data on student proficiency for every State, on student academic achievement in public and private elementary schools and secondary schools at least once every 2 years, in grades 4, 8, and 12 in civics and history.

The Bill authorizes \$1billion in Federal funding for five years, approximately 35% of current annual federal expenditures on STEM education, to carry out these provisions.

For more information please contact:

Ted McConnell Sr. Policy Advisor, CivXNow Coalition at civisted@gmail.com

Shawn Healy, Sr. Director Policy & Advocacy, iCivics at shawn.healy@icivics.org

Catriona Macdonald, President, Linchpin Strategies at cmacdonald@linchpinstrategies.com