

Civics Secures Democracy Act



Investing in Civic Education to Preserve America's Civic and Economic Strength

Civic Education and the Urgency of Now

While support for democracy as a concept remains high in the United States, an increasing number of Americans are open to nondemocratic alternatives.¹ Polarization has led to distrust of democratic institutions and an erosion of civic values and norms, which only fuels further politicization and polarization.² The interdependency of a free market and constitutional democracy makes this kind of instability a particular threat to economic sustainability and prosperity, putting at risk businesses and employees, as well as supply chains and investments.³

Applied early on and comprehensively for each and every student in the United States, civic education is a key solution agreed upon by a majority of Republicans and Democrats, alike.⁴ A more informed and engaged citizenry and stronger democratic institutions lead to more solid and sustainable economic outcomes, and act as stabilizing forces in the market.⁵ Conversely, a continued neglect of civic education will continue to weaken civic and economic strength.



Prioritizing Civics

The arms and space race of the 1950s provided a key “Sputnik Moment” for prioritizing and funding the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Today’s “Sputnik Moment” demands that same kind of investment in civic education. Currently, the federal government invests a mere 5 cents per K–12 student in civic education compared to 50 dollars per K–12 student for STEM.

The evidence is clear: decades of decline in civic education have contributed significantly to the discord, dysfunction, and widespread disengagement plaguing our nation today.⁶ Education policy caused a decades-long marginalization of civic education, and we need stronger state policy and accompanying federal funding to states and districts to ensure that civic education—reimagined for American democracy—is prioritized in K–12 schools.

What Is the Solution?

Because Americans realize what’s at stake, there is substantial proactive momentum—from a still-growing array of stakeholders—for high-caliber and innovative civic education policy solutions driven by communities.

For civic education to sustain and strengthen our constitutional democracy, we need a policy campaign at the federal level to pass the Civics Secures Democracy Act by January 2023.

Our long-term goal is to make civic education a priority in all K–12 schools—this is the fiber that sustains our constitutional democracy. Our theory of change is that policy investments in K–12 civic education are required to achieve civic education excellence in schools. While states and districts will adopt the policies that make sense for their communities, the availability of federal investments in civic education incentivize states to adopt stronger policies with accompanying implementation supports. We work to secure policies that prioritize and enhance K–12 education for the long term, and build the implementation networks necessary for impact.

Request a Meeting with Our Team

Contact Shawn Healy, iCivics Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy, at shawn.healy@icivics.org



What Is the Civics Secures Democracy Act?

The bipartisan Civics Secures Democracy (CSD) Act would authorize \$1 billion annually over five years, primarily to states and school districts. It also provides competitive grants to qualifying institutions of higher education, nonprofits, and researchers in their respective roles in advancing high-quality civics and history education in elementary and secondary schools, and establishes the Prince Hall Fellowship Program designed to strengthen and diversify the educator pipeline.

Filed by Reps. Tom Cole (R-OK), Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) in the House, and Sens. Chris Coons (D-DE) and John Cornyn (R-TX) in the Senate, the bill has [more than a dozen bipartisan cosponsors and is endorsed by more than 150 organizations](#).

CSD's passage is critical to execution of our state strategy, as this transformational federal investment in K–12 civic education signifies its national prioritization to states, districts, and schools. This investment would take the teeth out of the dreaded “unfunded mandate” argument often used to oppose strengthening civics at the state and local levels. With access to \$600M annually for teacher professional development, curricular materials, and student programming, states and districts would have access to the resources they need to prioritize civic learning.

Our Efforts and How You Can Support

CivXNow is activating stakeholders to secure passage of the Civics Secures Democracy (CSD) Act. There is a crucial grassroots aspect to this work. So far, we have mapped and activated presence in 395 of 435 congressional districts and all 50 states. We have engaged limited lobbying support and activated a national grassroots support campaign through local chapters of our network. With funds appropriated to civic education within one year, we can drive significant momentum in the space quickly. The ability to disseminate this messaging and activate networks will be key to getting new cosponsors on both sides of the aisle and passing CSD.

You can support these efforts through the following actions:

- ♦ Add CSD to the list of priority legislation supported by your company's government affairs team.
- ♦ Sign on to a letter of business leaders endorsing CSD.
- ♦ Contact members of Congress and the Administration with whom you have personal relationships and ask them to prioritize passage of CSD.
- ♦ Partner with corporate leaders in your state in adding your bylines to op-eds supportive of CSD (drafted by the CivXNow PR team) strategically placed in local metropolitan daily newspapers.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Pew Research Center, “Globally, Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy: But many also endorse nondemocratic alternatives,” October 2017, [pewresearch.org/global/2017/10/16/globally-broad-support-for-representative-and-direct-democracy](https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2017/10/16/globally-broad-support-for-representative-and-direct-democracy)
- ² More in Common, “Attitudes towards Democracy,” July 2021, [moreincommon.com/our-work/publications](https://www.moreincommon.com/our-work/publications)
- ³ Sarah Repucci, “Democracy Is Good for Business,” *Freedom House*, August 3, 2015, [freedomhouse.org/article/democracy-good-business](https://www.freedomhouse.org/article/democracy-good-business)
- ⁴ Frank Luntz, 2020, Data from a representative sample of 1,000 likely voters in a nationwide survey of policy priorities, provided by the author, summarized in CivXNow Information Sheet, September 2020, [civxnow.org/sites/default/files/resources/CivXNow_infographic_-_Luntz_polling_-_FINAL.pdf](https://www.civxnow.org/sites/default/files/resources/CivXNow_infographic_-_Luntz_polling_-_FINAL.pdf)
- ⁵ William A. Galston and Elaine Kamarck, “Is democracy failing and putting our economic system at risk?” *The Brookings Institution*, January 4, 2022, [brookings.edu/research/is-democracy-failing-and-putting-our-economic-system-at-risk](https://www.brookings.edu/research/is-democracy-failing-and-putting-our-economic-system-at-risk)
- ⁶ Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), “The Marginalization of Social Studies,” November 2018, [ccsso.org/resource-library/marginalization-social-studies](https://www.ccsso.org/resource-library/marginalization-social-studies); NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), *The Nation's Report Card: 2018 U.S. History, Geography, and Civics at Grade 8*, National Center for Education Statistics, Report #2020017, April 23, 2020, [nationsreportcard.gov/geography/supporting_files/2018_SS_infographic.pdf](https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/geography/supporting_files/2018_SS_infographic.pdf)

About the CivXNow Coalition

CivXNow is a coalition of partners from diverse viewpoints working to create a shift that elevates civic education and engagement as a national priority in order to protect and strengthen America's constitutional democracy. To achieve this goal, CivXNow advocates for bipartisan federal and state legislation that supports implementation of state and local policies that reimagine and deliver relevant, inclusive, and engaging K-12 civic learning, both in- and out-of-school.

[Visit civxnow.org](https://www.civxnow.org) to learn more.

About iCivics

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor founded iCivics in 2009 to transform civic learning through innovative, free educational video games and lessons that teach students to be knowledgeable, curious, and engaged in civic life. Since then, iCivics has become the nation's premier nonprofit civic education provider for more than 9 million students across the United States.

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