

The qualifications for self-government are not innate. They are the result of habit and long training.

--Thomas Jefferson

The better educated our citizens are, the better equipped they will be to preserve the system of government we have. And we have to start with the education of our nation's young people. Knowledge about our government is not handed down through the gene pool. Every generation has to learn it, and we have some work to do.

--Justice Sandra Day O'Connor

Dear Colleague:

Heeding advice from the Founding Fathers to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, America's leaders have recognized that our representative democracy requires that each generation of Americans be educated about its constitutional heritage, the rights and duties of enlightened citizenship, the practices of engaged citizens to be successful in self-government. Public schools were created in the United States to prepare children to understand our history, America's place in the world, informed decision-making, and to participate constructively in our representative democracy and our market economy.

Since 2001, instructional time and focus on these subjects has significantly decreased. Today's students are not learning the basic elements of American history, civics, geography, and economics that they need to be informed decision-makers in our representative democracy. That's why the Every Student Succeeds Act established two initiatives to address this startling lack of understanding: intensive student and teacher academies, and competitive grants to create a menu of innovative, effective instructional tools, for voluntary use by schools.

We agree with Justice O'Connor and believe in the historic civic mission of schools to create citizens who know and understand civics, economics, geography, and history. We hope that you will join us in supporting these competitive grants in FY 2017, and will join us in signing the attached letter to the Chair and Ranking Member of the Labor, HHS and Education Appropriations Subcommittee to express your support. For more information, or to sign on, please contact Melissa Robel (Representative Ross) at Melissa.Robel@mail.house.gov or Jessie Andrews (Representative Graham) at Jessie.Andrews@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Gwen Graham
Member of Congress

Dennis Ross
Member of Congress

The Honorable Tom Cole, Chairman
House Subcommittee on Labor, Health
and Human Services, and Related Agencies
Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Labor, Health,
and Human Services, and Related Agencies
Appropriations

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

We are writing to urge your support for two competitive grants authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act to help support improved instruction in the subjects that are vital for an informed citizenry in a representative democracy: American history, civics, economics and geography. Specifically, we request you provide the maximum possible appropriation for section 2231, American History and Civics Education, to provide competitive grants to support the student and teacher academies authorized in section 2232 and for the national activities authorized in section 2233.

Over the past decades, we have seen an increasing need to support local school districts in offering effective, engaging approaches to teaching American history, civics, economics and geography. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, recent test results indicate the need to improve both instruction and student learning in these subject areas. Funding these grants will make improvement a reality for many school districts by offering intensive learning opportunities to high school students and teachers, and by supporting the development of a range of innovative, effective approaches to civic learning that engage students from different backgrounds through different styles of learning. Research shows that too many rural and inner city students are not learning how to become engaged, contributing citizens. Through these grants, school districts have access to a menu of validated approaches for their voluntary use, and can select the instructional methods that best meet the needs of their students and communities.

It is vital to the future of our representative democracy that students graduate prepared for college, careers, *and citizenship*. We urge you to support competitive grants to non-profit organizations to improve the instruction of civics, economics, geography and history.

Sincerely,