



## NATIONAL COALITION FOR HISTORY

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Ms. Margo Anderson  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue SW.  
Room 4W311  
Washington, DC 20202– 5930

Via ‘Regulations.Gov’ Portal

Dear Ms. Anderson:

The National Coalition for History (NCH) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Secretary of Education’s proposed supplemental priorities and definitions for discretionary grant programs. NCH is a consortium of over 50 organizations that advocates on federal legislative and regulatory issues. The coalition is made up of diverse groups representing historians, archivists, teachers, students, political scientists, museum professionals, genealogists and other stakeholders. Numerous NCH members are national organizations with missions that focus on the improvement of K-12 history education.

In 2002, Congress authorized the “Teaching American History” (TAH) grants program in the Department of Education. Nearly \$1 billion of federal dollars were allocated over the next decade to improve the quality of K-12 history education. Congress terminated funding for TAH in fiscal year (FY) 2012 at the same time appropriations earmarked for civic education were also eliminated.

In addition, National History Day, authorized under the History and Civics Act of 2004, received an appropriation of \$500,000 in 2010 and 2011 which increased student participation in historical studies across the country. Congress terminated funding in 2012, thus eliminating support for an award winning history program with an evaluation study proven track record for middle and high school students and teachers.

While the administration supported the elimination of TAH grants, it never intended that all federal funding for history and civics education be discontinued. In 2010, the White House issued “A Blueprint for Reform,” detailing its plans for reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The *Blueprint* proposed consolidating funding for several K-12 subjects into a single competitive grant program called “Effective Teaching and Learning for a Well-Rounded Education.” Had the plan been adopted, history and civics would have been

competing with subjects such as foreign languages, arts, geography, economics, and others for funding.

Since the issuance of the administration's plan over four years ago, Congress has failed to act on a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as No Child Left Behind), and the "Well-Rounded Education" proposal remains in limbo. As a result, since FY 11 there has been no federal funding provided for history or civics education.

NCH feels the proposed supplemental priorities and definitions for discretionary grant programs provide a unique opportunity for the Department of Education to reinforce the importance of history and civic learning in elementary and secondary education and to recommit to ensuring the subject areas remains a priority for educators across the nation.

The *U.S. History 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) at Grades 4, 8, and 12* showed that less than one quarter of K-12 students performed at or above the "proficient" level. Secretary Duncan issued this statement when the results of the U.S. History 2010 NAEP were released:

**"The history scores released today show that student performance is still too low.** These results tell us that, as a country, we are failing to provide children with a high-quality, well-rounded education. A well-rounded curriculum is key to preparing students for success in school and life. That's why we're putting a greater emphasis on courses like history, art, drama and music in our efforts to fix No Child Left Behind."

Still, four years later, unfortunately few K-12 students receive a well-rounded education and history and civics education continue to lack federal financial support. Congressional inaction on the ESEA reauthorization continues to frustrate everyone concerned about a high quality K-12 education for our children, especially given the inadequacies of No Child Left Behind. The Department of Education can, and should, use this reassessment of its priorities to reaffirm Secretary Duncan's commitment to emphasize the importance history and civics in a well-rounded education.

The National Coalition for History proposes that the following priorities be included in the Secretary's proposal:

1. Establish a separate Priority Area for History and Civic Learning similar to proposed Priority Seven for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education;
2. Fund innovative history and civic learning projects that target under-served school populations (as outlined in HR1802, the "Sandra Day O'Connor Civic Learning Act of 2013") ;
3. Support history/civic learning teacher professional development models that are replicable;

4. Implement history/civic learning projects that employ new technologies;
5. Fund projects that encourage school - community partnerships and thus enhance students' civic knowledge and skills;
6. Encourage states to develop fewer, clearer, and higher standards of learning in the social studies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. The National Coalition for History and our member organizations look forward to working with the Department to ensure history and civic education once again play a vital role in providing our nation's students with a well-rounded education. Please contact me ([lwhite@historycoalition.org](mailto:lwhite@historycoalition.org)) with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,



Lee White  
Executive Director