



February 2, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
United States Senate
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Alexander:

The National Coalition for History (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, researchers, teachers, students, political scientists, museum professionals and other stakeholders. Several of NCH's members are national groups with missions centered solely on K-12 history education.

In fiscal year (FY) 2012 Congress terminated funding for the "Teaching American History" (TAH) grants program at the Department of Education. Appropriations earmarked for civic education and federal funding for National History Day, a nationally-recognized program which increases student participation in historical studies across the country, were also eliminated. As a result, since FY 11 there has been no federal funding provided for history or civics education.

These cuts came at the time national assessments of student's knowledge of American history and civics showed alarming results. 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. In addition, the 2010 NAEP measuring civics education, showed fewer than 25 percent of 12th graders were able to demonstrate proficiency in civics.

There is ample room for those of all political persuasions and educational philosophies to work together in a collaborative spirit to provide the next generation of Americans with a first rate education in American history and civics. We are all in favor of an educational system that yields an informed citizenry capable of respecting a wide range of perspectives on the past. These critical skills in historical thinking are valuable tools that students will apply to all their subjects—and to their lives. Employers often declare that writing effectively, analyzing cause-and-effect relationships, and researching across a wide variety of source materials are some of the essential skills they seek when appraising job candidates.

We appreciate your long record of support for history and civics. As chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee we urge you to include the following language in the reauthorization of ESEA. This was originally drafted by Senator Enzi and included in the 2011 Committee-passed ESEA reauthorization bill (modified to include American history):

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Insert, in the section on Programs of National Significance:

Grants shall be made to support developing, implementing, evaluating, and disseminating for voluntary school use innovative, research-based approaches to civic learning and American history, which may include hands-on civic engagement activities, for low-income elementary school and secondary school students, that demonstrate innovation, scalability, accountability, and a focus on underserved populations.”

Inclusion of this competitive grant program in the ESEA bill will help each state improve its instruction in these subjects so critical for our nation’s future. Research has demonstrated how to engage students in learning civics and American history, and teach them the analytic skills to apply their knowledge to present-day challenges. The loss of funding to disseminate evidence-based curricula has denied effective instruction in civics and history to far too many students.

As Americans, and as educators, we share the goal of ensuring that students receive the well-rounded education that will make them ready for “college, career, and citizenship” upon graduation. We urge you to support this modest proposal to increase civic literacy and historical knowledge amongst K-12 students in underserved populations.

Sincerely,



Lee White
Executive Director
National Coalition for History

The following NCH member organizations have asked to add their individual endorsement:

American Association for State and Local History
American Historical Association
American Political Science Association
Association for Documentary Editing
Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
National Council for History Education
National Council on Public History
National History Day
Organization of American Historians
Southern Historical Association