



## **The Civics Secures Democracy Act** *Senators Chris Coons (DE) and John Cornyn (TX)*

*Authorizes federal grants for educators, nonprofits, and resources to improve strengthen civics education from early childhood to higher education and diversify the civics education workforce*

**Background:** The Center for American Progress reports that, as of 2018, only nine states and the District of Columbia require a full year of civics or government studies, while 31 require a half- year of studies and fully ten states have no civics requirements at all. That lack of emphasis is reflected in low achievement levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and, for those students who take advanced placement U.S. government assessments, among the lowest achievement scores among the several dozen tested subject areas. The federal government, too, has chronically underinvested in support for civics education. Civics education can empower students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and mindsets to engage effectively in in the civic and political life of their communities. In today’s contentious civil environment, it is more important than ever that students are equipped with knowledge of our institutions and confronted with the enduring questions of civic life and political change. The *Civics Secures Democracy Act* represents a bipartisan commitment to strengthening civics education, from K–12 through higher education.

### **Legislation:**

- Authorizes \$1 billion annually for six years across federal civics education grant programs, broken out as:
  - \$585 for state education agencies, which would be awarded by formula and passed on to districts to support civics and history education programs, especially with a lens to closing civics achievement gaps;
  - \$200 million for nonprofit organizations, which would be awarded competitively and used to develop and provide access to evidence-based civics and history curricula and programs;
  - \$150 for institutions of higher education, which would be awarded competitively, used to support civics and history educator preparation and ongoing development;
  - \$50 million for researchers, which would be awarded competitively and used to assess and evaluate civics and history education programs and identify best instructional practices; and
  - \$15 million for a new Prince Hall Civics Fellowship program, which would diversify the civics and history education workforce by recognizing outstanding educators from underrepresented communities and providing a supplemental stipend in exchange for a five-year teaching commitment.
- Reauthorizes and modernizes an existing civics grant program for colleges and university centers or programs on American political thought and history, including by protecting programs’ academic freedom and requiring partnership with local school districts.
- Requires the administration every two years of the NAEP in civics and history to students in grades 4, 8, and 12.
- Strengthens and makes sustainable the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation and James Madison Fellowship Program by recapitalizing their respective trusts and providing them broader investment authorities.

**Endorsements:** CivXNow Coalition, American Bar Association, YMCA of the USA, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Youth Leadership Council, among others.

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