



CIRCLE

The Center for Information & Research on
Civic Learning & Engagement

Federal Policies on Civic Education and Service

by Emily Hoban Kirby, Peter Levine, and Brent Elrod
March 2006, Revised June 2006

The Federal government supports programs designed to encourage civic participation and increase civic knowledge. This fact sheet summarizes current federal legislation intended to mandate or encourage civic education and service programs for young people. In addition, it contains a list of relevant federally funded programs.

I. Legislative Support for Civic Education and Service

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines “core academic subjects” to include civics and government, economics, history, and geography (20 USC 7801). The list of “core academic subjects” triggers important provisions of the Act. For example, schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress in mathematics and reading or language arts are identified for “school improvement.” They are then required to “incorporate strategies based on scientifically based research that will strengthen the core academic subjects” (20 USC 6316). States are required to develop plans to ensure that all “teachers teaching in core academic subjects” are “highly qualified” (6319). Federal grants for comprehensive school reform are intended to improve “the academic achievement of all students in the core academic subjects” (6513).¹

The Education for Democracy Act has been incorporated as a subpart of No Child Left Behind (20 USC 6711 et seq). Its purpose is to “improve the quality of civics and government education by educating students about the history and principles of the Constitution of the United States, including the Bill of Rights; to foster civic competence and responsibility; and to improve the quality of civic education and economic education exchange programs with emerging democracies.” This legislation authorizes several federal grant programs, described below.

Under a different section of No Child Left Behind, the Secretary of Education is authorized to award grants for the “teaching of traditional American history” (20 USC 6721), treated as a separate academic subject (not as a component of social studies). The Secretary is also authorized to make grants for character education. The “elements of character” to be promoted in character education

include “caring, civic virtue and citizenship, justice and fairness, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, [and] giving” (20 USC 7247).

One of the enumerated purposes of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 USCA 12501 et seq.) is to “renew the ethic of civic responsibility and the spirit of community throughout the United States.” In the Act, “service-learning” is defined as a method in which students or other participants learn through “active participation in thoughtfully organized service” that is “conducted in and meets the needs of a community,” is coordinated with an educational institution, “helps foster civic responsibility,” is linked to the academic curriculum, and provides “structured time” for reflection.

II. Federally Funded Programs

The statutes listed above authorize spending for related purposes. In addition, various federal departments and independent agencies have programs for civic education—some mandated by statute and some chosen as policy. Below is an alphabetical list of federally funded programs.

All indented text is quoted verbatim from federal websites.

The Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service was formed to engage Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to meet community needs. Each year, more than 1.5 million individuals of all ages and backgrounds help meet local needs through a wide array of service opportunities. These include projects in education, the environment, public safety, homeland security and other critical areas through the Corporation’s three major programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

Senior Corps: Senior Corps offers a network of programs that tap the rich experience, skills and talents of older citizens to meet community challenges.

AmeriCorps: Through its programs, AmeriCorps provides opportunities for Americans to make an ongoing, intensive commitment to service.

AmeriCorps*State and National: AmeriCorps*State and National offers grants that support a broad range of local service programs that engage thousands of Americans in intensive service to meet critical community needs. AmeriCorps*State and National also administers grants for Indian tribes and U.S. territories, who are eligible for funding that is set aside to address critical needs within their communities.

AmeriCorps*VISTA: AmeriCorps*VISTA provides full-time members to community organizations and public agencies to create

and expand programs that build capacity and ultimately bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty.

AmeriCorps*NCCC: The AmeriCorps*National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) is a full-time residential program for men and women aged 18-24 that strengthens communities while developing leaders through direct, team-based national and community service.

Learn and Serve America: Learn and Serve America provides grants to schools, higher education institutions and community-based organizations that engage students, their teachers and others in service to meet community needs.

Special Initiatives: The Corporation supports a variety of special initiatives and innovation grants such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, President's Volunteer Service Award, and Presidential Freedom Scholarship Program.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$520,087,000; \$140,000,000 "to remain available without fiscal year limitation"

Corporation for Public Broadcasting: American History and Civics Initiative

The American History and Civics Initiative represents a major commitment by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to use its educational mandate, reach, and creative capacity to address critical shortfalls in middle and high school students' knowledge of American history, our political system, and their roles as citizens.

To do so, this initiative will award \$20 million in grants to forge unique and sustainable partnerships between public television producers and broadcast outlets, the educational community, curriculum developers, the high tech industry and other appropriate partners, to design, test and create integrated interactive multimedia platforms that improve learning.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$5.5 million²

Institute of Museum and Library Services: Museums and Libraries Engaging America's Youth

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is an independent federal grant-making agency ... In the coming year the Institute will place a spotlight on the role of Museums and Libraries Engaging America's Youth. This initiative will build upon past support in this area, which has included research, convenings, publications, and over \$240 million in grants over the past six years. The initiative will focus primarily on young people aged 9 – 19. It will examine what works, share best practices, encourage more

effective programming, and build bridges among libraries, museums, and public policy makers.

During the next year the Institute will analyze its past grant-making, develop case studies to explore best practices, provide monthly updates with project profiles, resources and tips on its web site, and encourage the development of new models through its National Leadership Grant program. Next fall the Institute will convene a national conference and publish the results of its analyses and case studies.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$247 million

National Archives and Records Administration: Digital Classroom

The Digital Classroom is the National Archives' gateway for resources about primary sources, activities and training for educators and students. Among other things the Digital Classroom provides teachers with resources such lesson plans, trainings and remote workshops to teach students using primary sources. For students, it offers research activities, online exhibits and even lets students simulate signing the Declaration of Independence.

Program description written by author and based on information contained on the National Archives Web site.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$50,000³

The National Conference on Citizenship

The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is a federally chartered corporation whose mission is to encourage a more active, engaged citizenry. Founded in 1946 to sustain the spirit of cooperation that bound citizens together during World War II, the NCoC was granted a federal charter by a unanimous act of the Congress in 1953.

Congress gave the NCoC the following three mandates:

1. to hold annually a national conference on citizenship on or about "Citizenship Day," September 17;
2. to assist in the development of more dynamic procedures for making citizenship more effective, including the promotion and encouragement of local, State, and regional citizenship conferences; and
3. to indicate the ways and means by which various organizations may contribute concretely to the development of a more active, alert, enlightened, conscientious, and progressive citizenry in our country.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$0

National Endowment for the Humanities: "We the People" Initiative

We the People is ... a National Endowment for the Humanities initiative to explore significant events and themes in our nation's history, and to share these lessons with all Americans. The program:

- Enhances the teaching and understanding of American history through grants to scholars, teachers, filmmakers, museums, libraries, and other individuals and institutions.
- Provides opportunities for teachers to deepen their knowledge of American history through summer seminars and institutes.
- Supports the reading of classic literature through the *We the People* Bookshelf, a collection of books recommended for young readers and made available to schools and libraries for use in local programs.
- Preserves our nation's historic documents, such as newspapers and presidential papers, and supports scholarly research, while expanding access to these important documents.
- Explores the lives and deeds of heroic men and women from America's past through the annual "Heroes of History Lecture." The inaugural address was given by historian Robert V. Remini on the subject of "Ordinary Heroes."
- Disseminates knowledge of American history through exhibitions, public programs, and partnerships with the state humanities councils.
- Encourages students to reflect upon important American principles and events through the annual "Idea of America" essay contest.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$11 million

U.S. Department of Education

- **Close Up Foundation**

The No Child Left Behind Act authorized the Secretary of Education to award grants for fellowships with the Close Up Foundation, a non-partisan non-profit organization in Washington, DC. The Close Up Fellowship program pays for economically disadvantaged, middle and secondary school teachers and students, whose families have moved to the United States within the last five years, to spend one week in Washington, DC attending seminars on government and current events and meeting with leaders from the three branches of the federal government. The program also supports professional development related to civic education for teachers of participating students.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$1.5 million

- **Office of Innovation and Improvement**

The Office of Innovation and Improvement manages the "Teaching American History Grant Program," the mission of which is "to support programs that raise student achievement by improving teachers' knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of American history."

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$119 million

- **The Education for Democracy ACT (ESEA II, Part 3)**

Under this subpart of the No Child Left Behind Law, funding is provided for the Center for Civic Education, the National Council for Economic Education and several other civic education organizations. Funding for FY2006 the Education for Democracy Act was \$29.1 million.

Domestic Programs (\$17.1 million)

To implement national civic education programs in the United States, the Center for Civic Education receives approximately \$ 17.1 million to implement the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program, We the People Project Citizen, the School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program, and professional development summer institutes for teachers. Included in that domestic allotment, is a \$3 million cooperative program administered jointly by the Center, the Center on Congress, and the National Conference of State Legislatures to "to implement a comprehensive program to improve public knowledge, understanding, and support of the Congress and the State Legislatures." Funding from this cooperative program also finances the annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education.

International (\$12 million)

Under the Education for Democracy Act, the Center receives about \$4.5 to implement the Civitas: International Civic Education Exchange Program which is currently providing democracy education in more than 70 countries. The National Council for Economic Education receives about \$ 4.5 million to implement an economic education exchange program to assist countries in their transition from command to market economies. Another \$ 3 million is set-aside for a competitive award program for additional international exchanges.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$29.1 million

- **Character, Civic, Correctional Education**

The Character, Civic, and Correctional Education (CCCE) group, housed in the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, administers programs in character, civics, and correctional education, including providing financial assistance for character, citizenship, and correctional education activities

in elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education, and reporting on issues and programs, disseminating information, and providing technical assistance to state agencies and state and local correctional institutions. These activities may be carried out by state and local educational agencies and by other public and private nonprofit organizations.

FY 2006 Appropriation: Character Education \$24 million

- **English Literacy and Civics Education**

The English Literacy and Civics Education Program is an integrated program of educational services to immigrants and other limited English proficient populations to acquire the basic skills they need to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens. Local providers implementing EI/Civics programs are charged with incorporating instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$68.6 million for "integrated English literacy and civics education services to immigrants and other limited English proficient populations."

- **Presidential Academies for American History and Civics Education Program**

This program supports the establishment of Presidential Academies for the Teaching of American History and Civics. The Presidential Academies offer workshops for both veteran and new teachers of American history and civics to strengthen their knowledge and preparation for teaching these subjects.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$2 million

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers**

The focus of this program is to provide expanded academic enrichment opportunities for children attending low performing schools. Tutorial services and academic enrichment activities are designed to help students meet local and state academic standards in subjects such as reading and math. In addition 21st CCLC programs provide youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, technology education programs, art, music and recreation programs, counseling and character education to enhance the academic component of the program.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$981 million

- ***The Civic Education Study (CivEd)***

The Civic Education Study (CivEd), conducted in 1999, provides information on U.S. ninth-graders' knowledge of democratic practices and institutions and on how it compares with the knowledge of students in 27 other participating countries. In addition, CivEd provides data about U.S. ninth-grade students' attitudes toward democracy, national identity, international relations, and social cohesion and diversity.

FY 2006 federal appropriation: \$0

- **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Assessment**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as "the Nation's Report Card," is the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas. Since 1969, assessments have been conducted periodically in reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography, and the arts.

In 1998, NAEP administered the latest civics assessment to approximately 22,000 students at grades 4, 8, and 12 in the nation. The national sample assessed 670 schools at grade 4, 697 schools at grade 8, and 566 schools at grade 12. The assessment measured students' knowledge of civics and American government. The next civics assessment is scheduled for 2006.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: \$90 million (\$30 million for Civics Assessment)⁴

U.S. Department of Justice

- **The National Youth Court Program**

The National Youth Court Program, housed in the Office of Juvenile Justice, promotes the activities of youth courts, which offer communities a program in which youth are judged by their peers for minor delinquency, status offenses, and problem behaviors. Youth court programs have expanded rapidly, with more than 1,000 youth court programs in 48 States and the District of Columbia since the end of 2003.

OJJDP established the National Youth Court Center in 1999 as a central point of contact for youth court programs. In addition to serving as an information clearinghouse, the Center provides training, technical assistance, and resource materials. National guidelines were developed to assist youth court programs in developing policy and implementing

practices that promote accountability and integrity in the juvenile justice system.

OJJDP and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) annually provide \$700,000 to the National Youth Court Program; the federal government has provided more than \$3 million to date. The National Youth Court Center is funded in collaboration with NHTSA.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: *discretionary decision by OJJDP Administrator*

• **Law-Related Education Program**

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the Department of Justice funds law-related education through Youth for Justice, which is a partnership of the American Bar Association Division for Public Education, Center for Civic Education, Constitutional Rights Foundation, Phi Alpha Delta, and Street Law, Inc. They are funded to provide curriculum and instructional materials, professional development, networks, and other service to promote students' understanding of the law.

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: *discretionary decision by OJJDP Administrator (approximately \$1 million)*

U.S. Department of Homeland Security: The Office of Citizenship

The Office of Citizenship is mandated by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to promote instruction and training on citizenship rights and responsibilities and to provide immigrants with information and tools necessary to successfully integrate into American civic culture.

The primary focus will be on providing information and resources to immigrants at two key points in their journey towards civic integration: when they first become permanent residents and when they are ready and eligible to begin the formal naturalization process.

One of the key goals of the office is to promote education and training on citizenship rights, privileges and responsibilities for immigrants interested in becoming citizens by:

- Updating and standardizing materials used for citizenship instruction
- Improving access to materials and instructional opportunities for immigrants interested in becoming citizens
- Publicizing available programs and resources to immigrants

FY 2006 Federal Appropriation: *\$115 million*

NOTES

¹ However, some provisions of the Act itemize the core academic subjects without reference to civic and government. For example, special programs and projects to improve educational opportunities for Indian Children (20 USC 7441) lists seven “core academic subjects” but does not authorize spending on civics and government.

² At the time of publication, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was still reviewing its grant applications and had yet to determine how much of its FY06 television programming grants budget (\$72.6 million) would flow to American History and Civics Initiative awardees for project R&D. According to a program administrator interviewed for this fact sheet, initial grant awards for R&D will be smaller than awards in fiscal years 2007 and 2008; the \$5.5 million figure was the best estimate the CPB administrator could offer.

³ The National Archives funds the Digital Classroom project from its overhead budget. The NARA administrator interviewed for this fact sheet provided the estimate listed here, which is likely higher than the actual amount allocated for the content development and website maintenance involved in the project.

⁴ The NAEP administrator interviewed for this fact sheet estimated that roughly \$30 million of the agency's FY06 appropriation would apply to its nationwide Civics Assessment, based on the \$6 million it cost the agency to run a ten-state pilot in FY05.