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As Campaigns Court the Youth Vote, New Research Shows Only 9 States Require Civics Ed. Testing for Graduation

Review of States Show Dramatic Drop since 2001 in Regular Assessment of Social Studies Subjects; From 34 States in '01 to Just 21 Today

Medford/Somerville, Mass. – A national assessment of states' civics education requirements released today by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement ([CIRCLE](#)), the preeminent youth research organization based at Tufts University, shows growing weakness in support for citizenship, government, law, current events, and related topics.

The [fact sheet, funded by the S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation and released today by CIRCLE](#), covers all 50 states and shows that in the 2012-13 school year, 21 states require a state-designed social studies test – a dramatic decrease from 2001, when 34 states conducted regular assessments on social studies subjects. Furthermore, only eight states provide standardized tests specifically in civics or American government: California, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia. Of those eight, Ohio and Virginia are the only ones that require students to pass that test to graduate from high school, although Maryland and Florida have plans to add such requirements.

The release of this new fact sheet comes just weeks before the 2012 presidential election. Both candidates are actively courting young voters, and new voter ID laws could potentially complicate voting for this highly-sought-after group. [A poll](#) conducted from June 22- July 2 2012 by CIRCLE for the Youth Education Fund (YEF) showed that young people did not understand the new laws: “68% of young people were either unable/unwilling to answer or were incorrect about whether their state required a photo ID to vote.” And from that same poll, “80% of the young voters were either unable to answer or incorrect about their state’s early registration rules.” Current events and voting are rarely emphasized in state civics requirements.

The fact sheet asserts, “Social studies courses such as history, civics, and economics provide students with the necessary civic skills and knowledge to be effective 21st century citizens. However, since the passage of No Child Left Behind, many states have shifted focus away from social studies and have dramatically reduced the number of social studies assessments.” To make matters worse, assessments have shifted from a combination of multiple-choice questions, essay questions, and other assignments to almost exclusively multiple-choice exams since 2000, meaning that the material tested tends to be relatively simple facts rather than the ability to apply information and skills to complex situations.

You can download the full fact sheet, with an assessment for all 50 states, by going here: <http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/State-Civic-Ed-Requirements-Fact-Sheet-2012-Oct-2.pdf>.

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CIRCLE (www.civicyouth.org) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous gift from the Pew Charitable Trusts and is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. CIRCLE's reputation for reliable, independent, timely research has been hailed by experts in the field of civic partnership, such as Harvard University professor Robert Putnam, who said CIRCLE has brought "the best and most serious research to one place."

The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service (<http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/>) is a national leader whose model and research are setting the standard for higher education's role in civic engagement education. Serving every school of Tufts University, Tisch College creates an enduring culture that prepares students to be lifelong active citizens.

Tufts University (<http://www.tufts.edu/>) located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the university's schools is widely encouraged.