



# Illinois State Board of Education

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Gery J. Chico  
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Education

**DATE:** December 31, 2014

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Honorable John J. Cullerton, Senate President  
The Honorable Christine Radogno, Senate Minority Leader  
The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Jim Durkin, House Minority Leader

**FROM:** Christopher A. Koch, Ed. D. *C. Koch*  
State Superintendent of Education

**SUBJECT:** Illinois Task Force on Civic Education Report (Addendum)

The Illinois Task Force on Civic Education Report delineates findings and recommendations pursuant to Public Act 98-0301. The Illinois Task Force on Civic Education explains that responsible citizens are informed and thoughtful, participate in their communities, act politically, and have moral and civic virtues. Included in the report are findings on civic education in Illinois, civic education in other jurisdictions, and best practices in civic education.

Specific recommendations included in the report are:

- require a civic education course in high school;
- revise Illinois Social Studies Standards (currently in process);
- require a service learning project in middle and high school;
- align licensure and certification requirements for pre-service teachers with best practices;
- provide access to professional development aligned to best practices;
- involve students in the election process; and
- extend the task force to gather public input through public hearings (completed).

This report is transmitted on behalf of the Chair of the Task Force, Shawn Healy, Civic Learning and Engagement Scholar for the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. For additional copies of this report or for more specific information, please contact Brian Houser at 217/524-4832 or [bhouser@isbe.net](mailto:bhouser@isbe.net).

cc: The Honorable Pat Quinn, Governor  
Tim Maples, Clerk of the House  
Tim Anderson, Secretary of the State  
Legislative Research Unit  
State Government Report Center



# Illinois State Board of Education

Gery J. Chico, Chairman

Dr. Christopher Koch, State Superintendent

## **Illinois Task Force on Civic Education**

# **Public Comments: Addendum to May 2014 Report**

**Prepared by**

**The Members of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education**

**Submitted to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly**

**Submitted pursuant to PA 98-0301  
December 2014**

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# Illinois Task Force on Civic Education

## Public Comments

### Submitted to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly

December 2014

This addendum of public comments to the report of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education is respectfully submitted to the governor of Illinois and the Illinois General Assembly.

## Background

In its May 2014 report to the governor and General Assembly, the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education presented seven recommendations.<sup>1</sup> Its seventh recommendation read as follows:

**Extension of Task Force Service:** The Task Force has requested an extension of the Task Force's service, from May 31, 2014, to December 31, 2014, to allow time to gather public input from key stakeholders via hearings held throughout Illinois and electronic submissions.

The General Assembly agreed to this recommendation to allow time for public feedback through public hearings and online comments. This resulted in a change in the submission of the final report to December 31, 2014. This addendum describes the background, the process, and the results from the public hearings and online comments.

The task force determined to gather public input through two processes, (1) four public hearings conducted regionally throughout the state and (2) online comments for those who could not attend the public hearings. Shawn Healy, civic learning and engagement scholar for the Robert R. McCormick Foundation who had served as chairperson of the task force, agreed to continue his role for the public hearings. He secured locations for the meetings, worked closely with the local media to provide advance announcements about the meetings, and ensured the presence of other task force members at the meetings. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) announced the meetings on its superintendent's e-mail messages and maintained the online site for comments. The task force requested that the Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC), a federally funded regional comprehensive center operated by American Institutes for Research, continue to provide technical assistance to ISBE and the chairperson in planning the hearings, documenting the public statements at the hearings, summarizing the results, and assisting in writing the addendum.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A presents the complete text of all seven recommendations.

## Comments Obtained Through Public Hearings

The task force determined four locations throughout the state for the public hearings to allow the public in various geographic locations to attend: northern urban (Chicago); northern suburban (Villa Park); central (Springfield); and southern (Carbondale). The task force chairperson, ISBE, and MWCC attended all meetings. The hearings followed a similar format:

- ISBE: short welcome and introductions
- Task force chairperson and members: 15-minute slide presentation
  - Purposes and goals of the task force as outlined in Public Act 98-0301
  - Processes used to investigate the task force charges
  - Findings from the investigation
  - Presentation of the seven task force recommendations

After the presentation, the task force chairman opened the floor for public comment from a list of those who had signed-in on a roster. The time for speaking was generally three to five minutes for each person, adjusted for the total number who wished to speak. The speakers came to the microphones and addressed the audience and the task force. Two note takers from MWCC captured the comments on laptop computers and recorders. All meetings were held from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. to allow students and school personnel to attend immediately after school and for the general public to attend after work.

In the four hearings (Table 1), 115 persons attended and 52 persons spoke. A variety of persons attended, including school personnel, high school students, parents, university professors, other private citizens, representatives of civic and voters' organizations, PTA representatives, and state representatives.

**Table 1. Public Hearings: Attendance and Spoken Comments**

	Chicago	Chicago Suburbs	Central Illinois	Southern Illinois
Total number attended	44	25	12	34
Total number who spoke	19	12	3	18
Percentage who spoke	45%	48%	25%	38%

## Comments Obtained Through E-Mails

For those unable to attend the public hearings, the task force and ISBE provided an e-mail address, [CETFR@isbe.net](mailto:CETFR@isbe.net). The address was available throughout the public hearing phase, October 13–November 7, 2014, and advertised as an additional option at each regional hearing and in the media. A total of 217 respondents participated through e-mail; participants were instructed to include their name and role or title with their comment. Table 2 shows an approximate summary of the respondents' roles. An accurate accounting is not possible for two reasons: respondents either self-identified as belonging to more than one category, e.g., parent and teacher, or did not provide their role in their comments. In addition, two groups—students

from one particular school and some career and technical education (CTE) teachers—used a standard template for their comments, thus increasing the quantity of the e-mails received but which, one could argue, skewed the quantity for those two groups because the e-mail comments were similar.

**Table 2. Online Comments: Approximate Totals and Percentages by Role Groups**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Approximate Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Total teachers and administrators</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>28%</b>
Identified self as teacher of civics, government, or social studies ; includes retired	29	13%
Identified self as CTE in various areas (e.g., agriculture, welding, child development) or business	26	12%
Identified self as working in employment, workforce, or career counseling	7	3%
<b>Total high school students</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>39%</b>
Identified self as from U-46 district	31	14%
Identified self as from a democracy school	54	25%
<b>Other</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>33%</b>
Identified self as university professor, member of public group or organization, or private citizen	20	10%
Unidentified	50	23%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Summary of Public Comments

The 52 oral comments from the public hearings are in Appendix B, followed by the 217 online comments in Appendix C, for a total of 269 comments. Reviewing in detail the public comments is not in the scope of this work; however, there are a few general findings found in both settings:

- In general, CTE teachers voiced concern that a required civics course will reduce students' time for electives and the students' ability to enroll in CTE courses.
- In contrast, civics, government, and social studies teachers noted that a required civic course is essential for students to understand government.
- High school students attending democracy schools found positive value in a civics education requirement for high school students.
- Some adults voiced concern about civics education being an unfunded mandate.

## Response from the Task Force

Members of the task force attended the regional public hearings and read the comments provided via email. From this review, the task force chairman worked with the other members to produce recommendations. The Illinois Task Force on Civic Education felt compelled to respond to the public's feedback as it was supportive, critical, and universally constructive.

**Recommendation 1: Civic Course Requirement**—Task force members purposely placed the required high school civics course atop the seven recommendations. Illinois is one of 10 states without a civics or government course requirement, and empirical research demonstrates the value of exposure to such courses in developing students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Niemi & Junn, 1998). Currently, the state requires two credits of social studies for high school graduation, one of which must include a year of coursework in U.S. history. Although the task force did not take a position on whether this credit requirement should be expanded in light of a new civics course requirement, the members learned that many Illinois districts already require three social studies credits to graduate, which is in line with the demands of state colleges and universities.

The task force completed a random sample survey of 5 percent of Illinois high schools through support from the McCormick Foundation. The survey revealed that roughly 60 percent of Illinois high schools require students to pass a civics or government course to graduate, in comparison with more than 90 percent of students nationally. Civics and especially government courses are offered almost universally as electives, however, at the Illinois high schools sampled, thus demonstrating that the infrastructure is in place for the universal offering of a civics course in Illinois. Moreover, although the task force did not stipulate whether existing government courses would meet the recommended civics course mandate.

Numerous residents voiced concerns that a new course mandate would crowd out important elective course offerings. These legitimate concerns should be allayed in light of the evidence presented earlier in this report, but the task force still acknowledges the risk. Moreover, the task force feels strongly that the benefits of exposure to a high school civics course outweigh the concerns and risks.

**Recommendation 3: Project-Based/Service Learning Requirement**—The task force's third recommendation—required service projects for middle and high school students--attracted similar criticism. Once more, there is abundant evidence from existing research on the merits of school-based service (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007), including comments from students and teachers through public comments of its prevalence throughout Illinois. The task force seeks to make this best practice universal, still providing schools and districts with autonomy to develop their own parameters for such projects. The task force points to Tennessee (Levine, 2012) and its recent successful implementation of a law of this nature as further affirmation of its wisdom.

**Other Recommendations**—The remaining recommendations drew little criticism and much praise. The task force is elated that the Illinois State Board of Education has already authorized a process to revise state social science standards (Recommendation 2: Revisions of Illinois's Social Studies Standards), and is grateful to the Illinois General Assembly for extending the task

force in order to hold public hearings and elicit public comments (Recommendation 7: Extension of Task Force Service). Even Recommendation 6, Student Involvement in Elections, was partially realized with limited same-day voter registration in the November 2014 general election. Recommendation 4, Licensure and Certification of Teachers of Civics, and Recommendation 5, Professional Development, call for the infusion of civic learning pedagogies into pre service teaching programs and in-service professional development opportunities, respectively. Clearly, these recommendations complement Recommendations 1–3, and collectively, Recommendations 1–5 have at least some financial impact on schools, districts, colleges, and universities charged with implementing them. There is reasonable opposition to further unfunded mandates, and the task force humbly asks that the General Assembly and ISBE consider the fiscal implications of these recommendations and appropriate adequate funding for their implementation. Further, the task force asks that foundation and corporate funders rally to this important cause and support civic education organizations with deep competencies in teacher training and curriculum development.

In closing, the task force encourages immediate action on each of our unfulfilled recommendations and stands eager to help students, teachers, administrators, schools, and districts with their implementation. A few task force members promised the wherewithal and resources of their respective organizations, including the following:

- The Citizen Advocacy Center advocates for legislation that mirrors these recommendations.
- The Illinois Federation of Teachers plans on disseminating these recommendations among its roughly 100,000 members, activating its policy advocates in Springfield.
- The Illinois Press Foundation already has developed news literacy and First Amendment curricula and can continue to promote these resources, along with the broader recommendations of the task force, in opinion sections of member newspapers.
- The Institute of Politics at the University of Chicago plans on providing frameworks for local schools to develop and implement civic-focused experiential learning opportunities, mentors to middle and high school students interested in furthering their civic knowledge and engagement, and students and interns to support the work of civic education organizations.

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## Acknowledgments

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- Willowbrook High School, Villa Park  
Dan Krause, Principal, Willowbrook High School, and  
Dr. Scott Helton, Superintendent, DuPage High School District 88
- Lanphier High School, Springfield  
Artie Doss, Principal, Lanphier High School, and  
Jennifer Gill, Superintendent, Springfield Public Schools
- Carbondale Community High School  
Mr. Daniel Booth, Principal, Carbondale Community High School, and  
Steve Murphy, Superintendent, District 165

## **Appendix A. Agenda of the Public Hearings on Civic Education**

**Purpose:** To gather public input from citizens throughout Illinois regarding the civic education recommendations to be presented in a report by the Task Force of Civic Education to the Illinois General Assembly in December 2014.

- 4:00–4:10 p.m.** Agenda; Call to order; Overview of Public Act 98-0301  
Brian Houser, Principal Consultant, College and Career Readiness, Illinois State Board of Education
- 4:10–4:30 p.m.** Task Force members and their charge from the law; Public hearing goals; Task Force processes; Civic education defined; Findings from other states; Task Force recommendations; Public comment process  
Shawn Healy, Robert R. McCormick Foundation, Civic Learning and Engagement Scholar
- 4:30–5:55 p.m.** Public comments
- 5:55–6:00 p.m.** Next steps regarding the recommendations

### **Task Force Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1: Civics Course Requirement**

Illinois should require a standalone civic education course at the high school level that comports with the definition of civic education given in this report. Course content should transcend a simple focus on government institutions and include participatory civic learning practices like current and controversial issues discussions, service learning, and simulations of democratic processes.

#### **Recommendation 2: Revisions of Illinois’s Social Studies Standards**

*Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science* (K–12) should be revised to address skills—including news literacy—in addition to content. The Task Force recommends that the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013) be consulted as guidance for the revision of the state’s social studies standards. Civic learning experts and advocates should be included in the revision process. In addition, the Task Force wishes to emphasize that, although the state should adopt better standards, districts, schools, and classroom teachers should retain control over the local curriculum.

### **Recommendation 3: Project-Based/Service Learning Requirement**

Illinois should require that students conduct a service learning project by the completion of eighth grade and again by the completion of twelfth grade. Implementation and evaluation of these service projects is the responsibility of individual school districts. Projects must have concrete links to the formal curriculum, however.

### **Recommendation 4: Licensure and Certification of Teachers of Civics**

Illinois should ensure that licensure and certification requirements for preservice teachers of all disciplines and grades be aligned with best practices in civic education, including direct instruction, current and controversial issues discussions, service learning, and simulations.

### **Recommendation 5: Professional Development**

Illinois should ensure that inservice educators have access to professional development aligned with best practices in civic education. The Illinois General Assembly should seek an efficient and effective method of providing professional development for teachers of civic content and skills.

### **Recommendation 6: Student Involvement in Elections**

Illinois should take measures to make democratic processes more accessible through reforms to voter registration and election administration laws. The state has made promising progress in this area through the adoption of Suffrage at 17 (Public Act 98-51) and allowing high school students to serve as election judges (10 ILCS 5/13-4). Public schools should teach about elections, provide access for eligible students to register to vote, and encourage students to vote on Election Day. In order to boost youth voter registration and turnout, the state should consider allowing students to preregister at 16 when obtaining driver's licenses and also allow same-day registration at polling places.

### **Recommendation 7: Extension of Task Force Service—*Extension received***

The Task Force has requested an extension of the Task Force's service, from May 31, 2014, to December 31, 2014, to allow time to gather public input from key stakeholders via hearings held throughout Illinois and electronic submissions.

## Appendix B. Public Comments on Civics Education, October 14–November 6, 2014

University of Illinois at Chicago, October 13, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
1	<p>Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm here today, as many of you are, to support the recommendations of this task force and to stress their urgency and the need for their implementation. This next February, the University of Illinois Press will be publishing a book by Tom Gradel and [me] called <i>Corrupt Illinois</i>. The title suggests why is it the book would have to be written. It is the culmination of seven years of research. I'm going to leave with the reporter a copy of an earlier paper, which is relevant to this. In addition to those, we've now compiled it into a book.</p> <p>In the book and in the research, what we've confirmed is this. We've confirmed that Chicago is the most corrupt municipal region in the United States, and Illinois is the third most corrupt state in the country. If you want, I can go through the methodology later and all of that, but essentially, from 1976 to 2012, there have been 1,913 Illinois public officials convicted of public corruption in the federal courts in the state, and 1,597 folks have been here in the Chicago metropolitan region. In our book, we further assert that a major cure for this corruption is not simply to continue arresting more public official of the crimes or passing new laws about corruption.</p> <p>The major new step that needs to be taken is what this task force is recommending, which is to teach civics effectively in the schools in Illinois. It is important that our civics courses not just be the old-fashioned three branches of government, structure of government, and nothing else. It's important that they provide the knowledge, motivation, and experience to help the future citizens. It's what's usually called teaching political engagement. Let me tell you a story from 100 years ago. When the Vernon plan was introduced in 1909, it was not self-executing like we think it was. It was followed instead by the Riker manual, which taught eighth graders for decades about the principles and projects proposed in the Vernon plan.</p> <p>What this did was create civic leaders who later headed projects like and the diagonal boulevards, the Michigan Avenue Bridge. It also created an aware group of voters who were willing to pass the tax increases necessary to fund these public work projects. I'm suggesting that a new program of civics education in Illinois will have the same effect. That's why I support the recommendations of the commission to make civics again a required course as it should be, to revise the social studies standards, to require service learning projects linked to the curriculum, to license teachers of civics to provide professional development, and to involve students in elections.</p> <p>Based on our findings about public corruption in Illinois, I wish we had an additional recommendation that we need to teach the history, the causes, and the cures of corruption in the same way that teaching the Vernon plan brought physical changes to Chicago in the last century. One way this could easily be done would be to teach Patrick Collins's book, <i>Changing the Culture of Corruption</i>, which is an appropriate high-school-level book. Only by changing the machine of politics and the culture of corruption can we move forward as a state, and only by creating an active and involved citizenry can we do that.</p>	Dick Simpson Professor, University of Illinois at Chicago

University of Illinois at Chicago, October 13, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
	<p>I'm also the coeditor of this book, <i>Teaching Civic Engagement</i>, published by the American Political Science Association. Among others, it provides best practices for teaching civics, civic education, and civic engagement. I also serve as a consultant to the Association of American Colleges and Universities in their efforts to teach civic education across all disciplines in colleges and universities, including community colleges.</p> <p>What I know from both of these experiences is that we have evidence-based research on how to provide civic education. We don't have to invent it. It's already been invented. Instead, what we have lacked is the political will to require it. The recommendations of this task force, in my view, are important first steps in providing education for citizenship that has been lacking in Illinois in recent years and is one of the main reasons that we are the most corrupt city in the country.</p>	
2	<p>Hello. My name is Allie Niese. I am the director for the Illinois Center for Civic Education. I'm also a graduate student at Northwestern University in the education program. I also just recently received the James Madison Fellowship, which awards scholarship money for students. What I have to say is that all of what I have achieved thus far, and especially the way that I think about the world and I think about day-to-day things I hear in the news, wouldn't be possible if I hadn't participated in a civic class that I did in my senior year of high school.</p> <p>I participated in the We the People Program, which I now lead as a deputy director. It was a part of the AP [course in] U.S. government in high school. During that year, those mock congressional hearings, which the We the People Program consists of, gave me the opportunity to learn about what participation means, taught me what it means to think critically about my government, and taught me how to participate in government, but most importantly, that taking ownership of my citizenship was essential and was necessary.</p> <p>I believe firmly that a civic class, in addition to all the recommendations here, especially the professional development one of the task force, are absolutely critical in moving forward because I believe, like I know our founders believed, that public education's main purpose should be to educate the citizens so that they can participate in the nation that they are a part of. ...[W]hat I hope one day to be able to teach very soon would be a class that would allow me to do all this [and] support me in that path. Thank you.</p>	Allie Niese Director, Illinois Center for Civic Education
3	<p>Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Maria Angeles. I work at Metropolitan High School. The Bill 98, I am for it because it's there, and because it's something that students need because we have four years of English, we have three years of math, and we have three years of science, and just two years of history. That's not enough to make us decide if we want to go into politics or if we want to just pursue something else in life. Mainly, when we're doing the constitution test in our U.S. history class, they're just treating it as an AP—as if it were an AP exam. They just want us to get it done with, and let's continue on with the next lesson, and I don't think that that is fair. I think that they should enforce more on it because that's what we're going to be doing later on in life.</p>	Maria Angeles Metropolitan High School

University of Illinois at Chicago, October 13, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
4	<p>Good afternoon. My name is Stan Zoller, and I'm a board member of the Journalism Education Association and its Illinois affiliate, the Illinois Journalism Education Association. On behalf of both organizations, I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony today. As the largest association serving the nation's scholastic journalism educators, our mission statement is to, among other things, support free and responsible scholastic journalism by providing resources and educational opportunities, promote professionalism, and encourage and reward student excellence and teacher achievement while fostering an atmosphere that encompasses diversity and builds unity. By meeting these objectives, we aim to meet our ultimate goal, instill in student journalists the need to provide viable, independent, and accountable media reports so their news consumers have the information to make well-informed civic decisions. Through comprehensive news literacy education, young journalists as well as young news consumers can practice essential critical thinking skills that extend across the entire curriculum. These are all key elements of JEA's news literacy curriculum. In their book, <i>The Elements of Journalism</i>, Bill Kovach, founding chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, and Tom Rosenstiel, executive director of the American Press Institute, define journalism as "storytelling with a purpose."</p> <p>That purpose is to provide people with information they need to understand the world. The first challenge is to find the information they need to live their lives. The second is to make it meaningful, relevant, and engaging. To achieve this, efforts like those of the news literacy program are essential if we are to get young people involved in the civic process. This is why the Journalism Education Association and the Illinois Journalism Education Association are appreciative of the passage of House Bill 2428 and the creation of Illinois's first task force on civic education. The job, however, is just beginning. Engaging young people so they can be informed as consumers is a monumental undertaking.</p> <p>Last week, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication sponsored a first national news engagement day, an initiative supported by not only news education organizations such as the JEA, but also professional media organizations, including the <i>New York Times</i>. Why is this initiative important? Because a 2012 study by the Pew Research Center found that 29 percent of those younger than 25 say they received no news the day before they were questioned, either from digital news platforms, including cell phones or social networks, or traditional news platforms. In essence, they were news-free. While that number has dropped somewhat since 2010, there still remains a substantial number of young people may not be prepared to make civic decisions.</p> <p>A comprehensive news literacy curriculum in Grades K through 12 would not only enhance critical thinking skills, but also an awareness of civic responsibility so they, as Rosenstiel and Kovach wrote, find information they need to live their lives. I've spent more than 40 years in journalism as a practitioner and journalism educator, during which time I've seen the need for engaging and objective news consumption more essential than ever before. While the delivery systems of news have changed from newsboys to Twitters, the need for a well-informed citizenry has not. The values and practices of the First Amendment are the cornerstone of civic responsibility. There are teachers who make their students memorize the First Amendment, all 45 words of it, and while that may</p>	Stan Zoller Board member, Journalism Education Association

University of Illinois at Chicago, October 13, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
	<p>sound like an arduous task, it is hopefully a lesson they won't forget. It's more than memorizing 45 words, however. It's remembering the five rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, which may be more difficult than it seems.</p> <p>It's a sad but true reality that in 2006, a study by the McCormick Tribune Foundation Museum found that 22 percent of Americans could name all five members of the Simpson family, compared to just one in 1,000 people who could name all five First Amendment freedoms. If we're counting on Homer and Bart to be our civic leaders, we're in good shape, but we don't, so the need for a well-informed civic-minded population is more important than ever before, which is why civic education curricula that incorporate news literacy needs to be front and center in Illinois schools. Thank you very much for your time and the work that you've done.</p>	
5	<p>Hi. My name is Barbara. I am a senior at a college prep on the Southwest Side. We are CPS's first democracy school, and we are also a UCI Global Citizenship Initiative school. I guess I'd like to say that I'm extremely in support of Public Act 98-301. I believe it's vitally fortunate for students in all grades to have access to civics. I'm a student living on the Southwest Side of Chicago. I've lived there all my life, went to school there all my life. Unfortunately, it's extremely common to see students who have honestly got just little to no faith at all in our democratic process. To be really honest, who could blame them? It's very difficult for people living in these areas to feel as if...their elected officials actually represent them, represent their needs, represent their wants. It's a really grim situation.</p> <p>However, there is a silver lining. The students in our schools from just recently started school in kindergarten to the ones that are graduating just now [from] high school, these students are desperate for change. They want to have the ability to make things better, but our current system feels very obtuse, that it's extremely difficult for young people to feel that they can change anything. This is where the cynicism comes in, this feeling like why get involved? Nothing's going to change. These students just clam up. They stay on Facebook. They stay on Twitter. Instead of doing anything, they just sit there. Education in civics, however, can change that. Ever since I found out what civics is, I've known that, but the problem is that I only ever actually found out what civics was when I was a sophomore in high school. That's a problem.</p> <p>I believe that everyone should have the same opportunities that I've had access to since I was able to learn about civics to know all these things, but it's very difficult to have access to this. My school is one of the very few CPS schools that require science and literacy courses, which we'd get for a civics course. This is something that's vitally important, and it's a reason why we've been able to accrue so much change over the past four years. We went from a dinky little neighborhood school to one of CPS's enrollment schools. My point is that it simply is not true what they say about us. We are not apathetic. We are not hopeless. We are not too stubborn to change. The truth is, we are going to be at the forefront if you guys let us, if you support this change for civics, this change for allowing us to be part of these democratic elections. Thank you.</p>	Barbara Student, Hancock High School

University of Illinois at Chicago, October 13, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
6	<p>Thank you, Chairman. My name is Adam Heenan. I've been teaching civics for six years in various capacities. Last year, the school I was at did have a program, Global Citizenship Initiative. Just to reiterate what we did for the audience, that year, my students—not adults, but the students—registered more than 200 of their peers and their family members to vote. Just to reiterate also what Mr. Healy had mentioned is, if it's not tested, then it's not taught. This year, because of capacity and because of budget cuts in my school, we don't teach that program anymore. What's that's translated to is for this election coming up, we've only registered 70.</p> <p>I think that that is something that should go down [in] the record for the people who are going to be reading it, but also for the young people who are going to be inheriting this system. 30 years ago, the past 30 years [of] education has very much shifted at the high school level from—it's shifted into college and career readiness. Frankly, it's just not enough because we're also in the business, at this point—and I want to say I'm in support of these recommendations, but particularly for recommendation number two. We're preparing kids for civic life. What that means is they're not just consumers. They're not just people who are going to be employers and employees, but they're going to be our neighbors as well.</p> <p>We want to make sure that we solidify the work that we do at a young age, and really play a part in adolescent development, civic development as well. I really want to applaud the task force and all the people who had a hand in this because I think that we need to talk about what we need to safeguard against courses that are being cut, against too much testing, frankly, and this is the kind of work that we need to do. Thank you all for showing up and for all the work that you do. Thank you.</p>	Adam Heenan Civics teacher, Curie High School
7	<p>I'm Brian Geiger. I'm from University of Illinois [at] Chicago. I'm a junior. I would really love recommendation number three, number six, and I appreciate the task force to the extent that they did recommendation number seven. Mainly, I'm for this because when I was in high school, the only civic course I'd probably take was U.S. history and Illinois constitution because it was required that I had to take the Illinois constitution in order for me to graduate. I started as a community activist in my community before I transitioned into the college life, and I can tell that you there are a lot of students out there in the community that are unaware of civic engagement.</p> <p>I can tell you that when I worked at the polls as a volunteer during election—during an election year, I can see that a lot of students, when I asked, who do you think will win this election and why? They are unaware. I'm for the recommendations because I don't believe—I believe that the next generation should not wait until an event happens for them to be more concerned about civic engagement. I think that they should learn civic engagement when they're in preschool all the way on up until their senior year of high school and ongoing college life because if they are aware of civic engagement, then they don't have to wait until an event happens. They can know how to pursue an event politically by hitting the polls and voting for who they believe would be the best to represent them. I really appreciate the task force coming here today, and you all are doing an amazing job. Thank you.</p>	Brian Geiger Student, University of Illinois at Chicago



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8	<p>Hi there. My name is Scott Brown. I'm a Ph.D. candidate [in] the political science department here at UIC, and an RA and sometimes TA. I think maybe I have a bit of a unique perspective as I grew up in Wisconsin. I think that growing up in Wisconsin from my early childhood is the definite skill set that is instilled in me the importance of civic engagement. Just let me share one real quick story, and then I'll [yield to the] speaker. In the fourth grade, as early as fourth grade, we took a trip with my Wisconsin history class. We used to have a class on the history of the state. We took a trip to the state capital.</p> <p>To me, on the way there, I could care less about the state capital or anything to do with politics as a ten-year-old, but I remember driving up to the capital. My dad was actually driving the bus. He worked for the bus company for 30 years. I remember looking over at him and smiling and seeing this capital it's actually the second highest dome in the country besides the capital in Washington, D.C. We just took a simple tour, and it was a simple day and it wasn't stressful. We took a nice tour, and we got to sit in the chamber where the state legislators sat. You would think that all these little ten-year-olds would be raucous and crazy, but I just remember very—almost awe that inspired me as a ten-year-old looking at all the art and the grandeur of the capital.</p> <p>I think that at this early age, it instilled in me this idea that I perhaps had a bit of efficacy. I felt much more empowered after I left. Maybe I didn't realize it as a ten-year-old, but I realized that all this stuff actually had a place that was—that people debated and people had civil discussions, and they happened in this beautiful institution of American government. I just want to say that I think that getting to the children and students when they're young and really—and so obviously, I'm in support of the bill. I just remember on the way home that day saying to my dad, "When do I get to vote? I want to vote." I was ten. I was like, "I want to vote. What do I have to do to vote?" That's it. Thank you.</p>	Scott Brown Student, University of Illinois at Chicago
9	<p>Good afternoon. My name is Mary Schaafsma. I'm the executive director of the League of Women Voters in Illinois. We appreciate this opportunity to make a few comments and commend the task force on its thoughtfulness and the commitment to the goals of civic education. The league was founded in 1920 by women whose efforts had led to the ratification of the 19th Amendment and who understood that with this newfound privilege came certain responsibilities. To ensure this goal, the league created citizenship in legislative schools and a belief that prepared and engaged citizens would impact voters and value civic participation.</p> <p>For the nearly 100 years since, the league continues to advocate strong civic education in our schools. The league the agrees with the task force when it wrote that robust democratic activity is not an innate human characteristic. Functioning democracy depends on knowledge, learned behavior, and civic grit. It is citizens who participate in their communities, who act politically and display moral and civic virtues. Again, you can graduate from this state's largest school district in the heart of the nation's most corrupt city and never have taken a course that explains to you how government works or how it is. How does this fact affect voter turnout with the clear understanding that we as citizens in a democracy have a duty to hold our elected officials accountable to us for decisions they make.</p>	Mary Schaafsma Executive director, League of Women Voters in Illinois

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	<p>The league is also concerned that the comforts of the legislative status quo has kept the Illinois General Assembly from being more insistent and deliberate on adding civics to Illinois's curriculum requirements. As the task force suggests, the lack of civics in the curriculum implies to students, parents, and educators that civic engagement is not important. The consequent efforts to tamp down cynicism I've heard from some of the students today I think is critical to understanding why it's important to reevaluate and relook at our civics education. We agree with the definition of civics education that the task force has suggested, and we wholeheartedly endorse all the recommendations made by the task force.</p> <p>We are particularly pleased that the recommendations include a standalone civic education course with its emphasis on development of critical thinking skills, discussions of current and controversial issues, service learning, and simulation of democratic processes. The league has, for many years, worked with high school students and their teachers to engage in mock elections prior to an actual election. Students regularly report that that experience has been meaningful. We think it would be interesting to see if those learning opportunities really do create lifelong participation. Again, thank you. The league stands ready to assist the task force's efforts as it continues its important work.</p>	
10	<p>Good afternoon. I am a high school teacher; I'm entering my 12th year. I know that no adult or anyone of any age responds very well to being talked to for several hours, so I commend you on your commitment to this important work that you're willing to do this for three weeks in a row. I teach at a public school in Chicago. I'm charged with supporting and educating all of the young people that walk through our doors. That is, regardless of race or gender, socioeconomic or legal status. That is, all of the young men and young women in our communities. In short, I teach our democracy. I take pride in that duty.</p> <p>I strive to give my students the knowledge and the skills that they will need, the practical experience to meet the expectations that we have of them as a state. That is, to be committed, active, engaged members of our community who feel invested in contributing to and making changes where they are needed. However, my proficiency in this area was hard won and required years of support from civic education nonprofits and hundreds of hours of professional development. However, it only took me one experience with my students to see the power of civic education and change any educational paradigm. In fact, just this morning, I visited students from my school who were, on their day off, gaining a deeper understanding of their own political values and then going off to campaign for candidate that align with those values.</p> <p>When you see young people who are active in the community, who have been exposed to quality civics education, and given the opportunity to be supported in their practice, I am sure you will join me in feeling in [a] giddy sense of pride and hope for where we are going as a state and a nation. A feeling like we must be doing something right, which is wonderful. What I see much more often are young people that are disengaged, that feel, at best, no connection, and at worst, feel embattled by their communities and their government. They see no worth in investing time, effort, and emotion into the world around them. Here, you cannot help like feel that you have failed</p>	Elizabeth Robbins Teacher, Chicago Public Schools

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	<p>these young people, and that their present and future, our democracy's present and future, are in real danger. The question for the state of Illinois is whether we should systemically support our youngest members in meeting their needs in civic education, or whether we shall be complicit in their frustration and disengagement. As a teacher, youth ally, citizen, and registered voter of the state of Illinois, I insist upon the former. Although I support and endorse all of these, I have to say that I must most strongly point out that a mandatory civics course in all high schools in this state is necessary. We must mandate multiple service learning projects for both middle and high school students in order to graduate. We must adopt and actively implement the C3 framework for Illinois state standards in the social studies. We need to support teachers in this difficult work, which most are not formally trained in, by giving them extensive professional development. We must require that preservice teachers be educated in and given practical field experience in civics education. We must provide programs for students to be actively involved in the election process, like my students were today. Your work is important, but so is my message. This will not get done without a state-supported mandated civics course. Our state, our democracy, and most importantly, our young people deserve that we take this critical step. Thank you for both your time and effort in allowing me to speak.</p>	
11	<p>Thanks for this hearing for the task force. It's great to have this moment to see this happening. It's a great time in Illinois civics education. I'm Brian Reed, executive director for Mikva Challenge. I'd like to give my strong endorsement of the full set of recommendations for the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education. For too long, civic education has gotten short shrift in this state, the only requirement being a very elemental constitution test in the middle school, and a fake constitution unit in high school. Sometimes not fake. Sometimes, it was real. It's a shame because we want to see our students become active, thoughtful citizens.</p> <p>It's one of our most important jobs as—that we have outside of being a parent and family member. It's to be a good citizen. The great news about civic education is we know what works. Let's face it. 30, 40 years ago, that civics class was pretty dull. It was pretty lecture-based. There's a lot of great organizations and teachers here that know how to teach civics well. We know how to put the new civics, to put students at the center of the education process, allow the students to practice community action and behaviors of being an engaged and powerful citizen. Today is an off day of school. Mikva Challenge would love to operate the school because we have a couple hundred students training to be election judges. We have a few dozen students campaigning.</p> <p>This month, we'll have thousands of students giving speeches in their classrooms on what they would put their....[voice fades out]. Civics isn't about power. It's not just about facts. It's about teaching young people to be ethical and powerful in their communities. That's what's so exciting about the [task] force initiative. I've been doing this work for 14 years now, so I get to see where all my students have gone and get to measure that. They vote about twice—a little bit more than twice—the rate of the average student. They volunteer in the community at a 40 percent higher rate than their peers. They volunteer on electoral campaigns at 15 times the rate. They're always running for office at the college level and some at the city level. We don't know what kind of rate that is.</p>	Brian Brady Executive director, Mikva Challenge

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	<p>Probably most importantly, when you ask students who do an action civics program, 80 percent say that it is their responsibility to get involved and make things better in society. That compares to about 39 percent nationwide. We see that this can transform students' lives. We can imbue them with a sense of purpose and a belief that they are responsible for their community. Civic education is not an extra we should squeeze into little parts of schools. Civics education is at the core of what we need to teach students. It is the key ingredient to strengthening our communities and our democracy in the long run. I applaud the work of the task force here, and I wish for some success with legislating.</p>	
12	<p>Hi, folks. My name is Devin Race. I'm a policy associate at the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. I've worked specifically with the Voting Rights Project, which aims to eliminate barriers to minorities participating in the electoral process. What I want to talk about is a program that we ran called—in coordination with other groups—called Chicago Democracy Week. There's actually a lot of people in the room who were really instrumental in that and did a fantastic job with it. League of Women Voters was a part of that. Mikva Challenge is and always has been a big part of that. McCormick Foundation funded a lot of Democracy Week events, and Chicago Votes was around registering voters.</p> <p>Chicago Democracy Week was extremely successful in getting 17- and 18-year-olds to turn out in primary elections. What I'm going to do is just give you an idea quickly of one of the Democracy Week events that was run called democracy class and the results of that, and then give specific recommendations based on it from what we learned from doing that. Here's what democracy class was. That's what the lawyers committee ran, and we adapted this really neat curriculum from Rock the Vote. Imagine all of you are in a high school classroom. You're all students. You would all be told your teacher first that you were going to understand the electoral process. There's a video from Rock the Vote, which goes through how historically in America, people were denied the right to vote and had to fight for it. This really connected with students because you're sitting there thinking votes is just a thing that you can do, and the opening of democracy class is to say, it isn't just a thing you can do. It's something that we had to fight for. It's something that's important. What would happen next is two of you would volunteer to be candidates, and then everyone in the class would register to vote in order to choose the—which one of you they wanted to be governor of their class. The voter registration forms that were handed out were real voter registration forms that the board of education prepared for 17- and 18-year-olds.</p> <p>One thing that happened off of this that relates to the recommendations that the task force had was to discuss controversial issues. A really wonderful example of how this can promote civic engagement is one controversial issue that students running for governor in their class wanted to talk about was legalizing marijuana. A student would have this idea and would look at their teacher like, can I actually talk about that? The teacher would say, if you can argue for it, and if you can say that it's good for your community for everyone to be able to smoke pot, go for it. The students, as you might guess, got really into that. I think that the discussion of controversial issues is</p>	Devin Race Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights

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	<p>important, not just because their issues didn't matter, but because they engaged students and let them understand the things that they care about are things that they can affect through the political process.</p> <p>I want to highlight one or two results of Democracy Week at large that show how effective these kinds of programs can be. 17-year-olds who could register to vote for the first time under the Suffrage at 17 bill voted at a higher rate than any other age group up to 47-year-olds. That means that there were kids—a large bracket of kids who were more likely to vote than their parents were. This was a tremendous success for the program, especially given that for programs like this in places that don't have civic engagement programs, 16- and 18-year-old turnout is ...[voice fades out]. The board of elections and the McCormick Foundation were really happy with this result. It shows that if you engage with students and show them they can do things that they care about in the electoral process, they actually do them. They go out and vote.</p> <p>Now, I want to highlight two specific recommendations related to the report that I think events like this demonstrate are a good idea. The first is to highlight something that's already in the report, which is allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote, so 17-year-olds who won't be 18 by the general election. We had a lot of students who weren't going to be 18 who really wanted to register to vote because the democracy class is so exciting, and were extremely disappointed that they couldn't. Allowing students to preregister is a great way to allow them to participate in the things that they find exciting.</p> <p>Then the second specific recommendation off of Democracy Week would be to expand programs like this, one-off, one-day, or one-week civics programs. I think the reason that could be helpful for the task force's report is that this can be a helpful on ramp to schools that are trying to get behind the idea of a required civics course. All the teachers that we talk to that we did Democracy Week with would strongly recommend the program to other teachers. I think that while we're on our way to the standalone required civics course, doing one-week or one-day programs like this that show teachers how inspiring they are for the students can be a helpful way to build public support for the required course. Thank you.</p>	
13	<p>Since I looked at this, I'll start. My name is Chris Kubic. I'm the social studies department chair at Grayslake North High School, district 127, in the northern suburbs. With me are Haley and Danielle and current students at our host institution, the University of Illinois at Chicago. Thank you very much. I thank you for your invitation to speak and for your work on the task force. While we applaud the work of the task force and the overall focus on civic education and encouraging education that equips and encourages students to participate actively in a democratic society, we're hesitant with the how.</p> <p>Everyone in this room would agree on the importance and the need and transformative power of civic education. The question is, how can we mandate—should we mandate that schools do this? That's the only part that we might have issue with. We stand firmly behind recommendations two, four, and five. We contend that those recommendations will allow teachers and school leaders to effectively promote civic education without the</p>	Chris Kubic Teacher and chair, Social Studies Department, Grayslake North High School

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	<p>burdensome provisions that may come from a mandate, as suggested in recommendations one, three, and six. Most of our testimony is based on our own experience with civic engagement.</p> <p>We have about 1,600 students, and a strong reputation for civic engagement, [that] I think starts with our mission statement. The mission statement is a bit of a mouthful. Forgive me for reading it. It reflects both the democratic end goal, participation in the community and democratic process, attention to student voice in adversity. It reads as [follows]: “Students engage in challenging tasks in which they draw upon personal strengths and diverse experiences, create meaningful connections, and develop innovative problem-solving skills. With the confidence and character gained from these experiences, students pursue their individual passions, participate responsibly, and reflect effectively in their communities.” Looks great on a placard. Hard to memorize.</p> <p>Clearly, you can see that there was democracy infused in that. I think that’s what drives our commitment to civic education. The school has a thriving public service practicum course. At most schools, actually. This is a full-year elective in social studies. Enrollment has grown steadily in the nine years of the course, and even longer at the other schools in the district. The course covers elements of economics, sociology, government, psychology, history, business, and beyond and challenges students to understand pressing societal concerns and then do something about it, which is the heart of civic engagement. The course features service projects chosen and organized by students, partnerships with local organizations and government bodies, and research and presentations about community needs and assets.</p> <p>It culminates in the passion project, in which students research, propose, pitch, design, and implement and evaluate a project about which they’re passionate. This is an outstanding example of civic education. We’d be happy to work with other districts to help to develop courses like this, but I’m just not sure it would be the same if it was a requirement. That’s, I think, the next phase of this. That’s the next task in the task force. We also recently had the honor of being designated a democracy school institution, and that process has increased conversations about how we can more consistently reflect democratic values in what we do and how we do it as a civic institution. The process entailed documenting our efforts to include a multiplicity of voices in what we do and how we do it.</p> <p>The democracy school initiative did not create our democratic culture. It highlighted it and got us talking about it. The fact that it was a challenge, it was an option, an honor, and we could rise to it and earn this designation made our conversations about democracy have a very different feel than if this was something that the state mandated that we had to do. You need to prove to us that you are a democratic institution. Again, everybody in the room would agree on the importance of civic education. I’m not sure it should be a mandate. Miss Friedel and Miss Lea will offer a recommendation that follows the same logic as the democracy school initiative that we just went through.</p>	



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14	<p>Hello. I'm Daniel Padia. I'm talking on behalf of Grayslake North High School. I was in PSP for my senior year, and the experience that I had in that class was outstanding. We did many different service projects as a team, a group of 25 students or so, give or take, in that class. We were able to put on passion projects that were significant to us. The thing that happened with that is everybody was there that wanted to be there. I don't think we would have had the same experience if it was a mandatory class, if everybody had to be there. For example, I did a passion project on Alzheimer's and dementia awareness, and I was able to get everybody in the entire school to wear purple on a specific day. The turnout was outstanding, and it's because students recognized that another student is doing something and that they want to be in support of that.</p> <p>As we were saying, if that class was mandatory, there would be so many different projects and things going on that people wouldn't be able to support as well as we could have the 25 passion projects that we had. I'm not saying that we shouldn't have people stepping forward and doing leadership and doing service projects, but just the fact that when we had such a strong community at our school because people saw what other people were doing and wanted to be a part of it, other than people having to do it. That's what we stand for. Haley will give you more of an alternative for that.</p>	<p>Daniel Padia Former student, Grayslake North High School</p>
15	<p>Hello, everyone. I'm Haley Friedel. As Mr. Kubic said before, I'm also a student here. I'm also a resident assistant for campus housing. I just want to talk about my experience in my public service class. I would not be able to do half the things that I do on a daily basis being an RA without this class, mostly because I chose to take it. I wanted to learn more about civic engagement and service projects and how to plan them, how to market and advertise them. It wasn't forced on me. I think that's why I took so much out of it.</p> <p>While I do believe that the intentions of the task force—specifically recommendation three—are good, I just don't think that it would be very beneficial for students to have—on here, it says project-based service learning requirement—just because we already have trouble getting students to do their homework as it is. We all know it's true. What makes you think that they're going to want to get up early on a Sunday morning and volunteer to pass out water at the Chicago Marathon at 5:00 a.m.? It's more something that they're willing to do, which is why I'm proposing that the task force try to put in place something where students complete a series of classes on service-based learning and projects, and then they get some sort of stamp or badge on their transcript that can identify them from all the other students that, hey, they wanted to learn about this.</p> <p>They wanted to get involved in their community. They wanted to learn about this. So that they can also have some sort of benefit for college when they're starting to apply to colleges because that would really stand out on their transcript when they are applying. I definitely think that that's something that we should start to think about, get students more motivated to do it instead of forcing them because I think that the outcome will just overall be better that way.</p>	<p>Haley Student, Grayslake North High School</p>

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	<p>The idea of a badge on the transcript is what made me think of the democracy school process. Again, it started these conversations about, hey, we get to prove that we do this rather than we have to. I think it took on a different kind of meaning. Recommendations two, four, five, I think [are] the means where we can really change the culture of education and eventually, the political culture in the state. The C3 framework and additional professional development for teachers both before and after attaining their license would help underscore the point that all teachers are teachers of civics, just like all teachers are teachers of reading and writing. Those recommendations are key. As we change that, we will see a sea change in the culture of education.</p> <p>Of course, we would support a civics course, service learning projects, and participation in the election process as valuable components of civics education. We just might take issue with it being a mandate, but we definitely support those initiatives in general. We want students to participate out of responsibility, not obligation. There is a fine line between them. I think of President [John F.] Kennedy's famous speech. He said ask not what you can do—ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country. He did not say, find out what you have to do for your country. Again, I think that's the next step for the task force. Again, thank you for your work and this opportunity to speak and completely mess up your system.</p>	
16	<p>Hi, everyone. I'm Andrea Alvarez, and I'm a union lawyer with Citizen Advocacy Center in Elmhurst, Illinois. I'm going to apologize. I was too busy working on some civic issues earlier, so I forgot my transcript. For my comment, I'm going to be reading off my phone, and I apologize for that. Thank you for providing the opportunity for me to testify today and for hosting public hearings that address the civic education crisis in Illinois throughout the state. At Citizen Advocacy Center, our goal is to build democracy by strengthening citizens' individual capacities, resources, and institutions for self-governance. One of the ways we need to achieve this goal is through civic education.</p> <p>On a daily basis, I interact with Illinois residents of all ages who would like to participate in democracy but aren't sure of how to engage or face obstacles to engage them with their local government bodies. It is imperative for the integrity and success of our democracy that citizens are active, informed, and effective. Further, stronger civics standards are not only good for a healthy democracy, but for a healthy economy. A recent report, the civic health, employment, and engagement strengthen the economy showed that states and localities with more civic engagement—sorry. Reading from your phone is harder than I thought. With more civic engagement in 2006 saw less growth in unemployment between 2006 and 2010.</p> <p>The report states that participation in civil society can develop skills, confidence, and habits that make individuals more employable and strengthen the networks that help them find jobs. Further, Illinois high school students who participate in service learning during class or who serve in student governments succeed much better academically than their peers with similar backgrounds. In addition, the report states that many individuals owe their employment to fellow members of social or civic groups or employ their most marketable skills in national and</p>	Andrea Alvarez Union lawyer with Citizen Advocacy Center, Elmhurst



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	<p>volunteer service, belonging to groups and serving on committees were correlated with unemployment change at the state level from 2006 to 2010.</p> <p>Participation in civil society spreads information. Active and organized citizens can demand and promote good governance and serve as partners to government in addressing public problems. States with civic engagement have much higher performing public schools, regardless of the state's demographics, spending, and size of classes. American cities with stronger civic organizations are better able to make wise choices. Civic engagement can encourage people to feel attached to their communities. The percentage of people who report being attached to their communities predicts economic growth.</p> <p>For the past five years, Citizen Advocacy Center has celebrated the anniversary of the signing of the [U.S.] Constitution by bringing in a speaker with firsthand experience exercising one of the First Amendment freedoms. This year, as I went to suburban high schools and visited with over 500 students, I asked each group, who can name the first five—the five First Amendment freedoms? The majority of students could not name more than two or three freedoms. At CAC, we speak with social studies teachers from middle schools to high schools in a variety of ways. Teachers tell us stories of threats and actually eliminated social studies departments because it's not mandatory.</p> <p>The idea I've heard from a teacher in a majority minority community that teachers in our schools fear bringing in students to participate in these hearings because they are afraid of backlash. A social studies teacher recently told me that since this is not a subject that required state testing, she was not receiving support from the administration to increase both civic extracurricular activities and classroom time devoted to being a good citizen. For the health of our democracy and our economy, I implore the state of Illinois to adopt the recommendations set forth by the task force on civic education. Thank you.</p>	
17	<p>My name is George Blackmoon. To the chairman of this task force, and to the concerned citizens and students of the university. Just look here. This is a university, and it shows fake. The empty seats alone shows that the task force—I challenge you as a task force to improve your outreach program. Evidently, it wasn't successful. The brochures and the empty seats shows fake. I wanted to know how did you reach out to the black community in the city of Chicago, to public schools, to their civic teachers, principals. I'm wanting to know how you made a choice for your task force hearing being in a west suburb at that particular school.</p> <p>As a citizen, I have every right to ask these questions. Perhaps, I won't receive any answers. Did you make it known, when I heard it earlier yesterday, I think on public radio, you did not indicate a desire to hear public comments. You told your mission and your mandate and money that you received a grant, but you didn't put enough emphasis on public participation. What makes Chicago a corrupt city, most corrupt city politically in the nation? The most racist citizen in the nation? You have acknowledged that the state has a revolving door about putting your elected officials in prison. It is a culture of corruption. A culture of corruption.</p>	George Blackmoon Citizen

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	<p>The political system, the religious leaders, the educators, the people in the office, that young man, the first one speaking, he's about my age, talking about the Vernon plan and everything, how these rich people decide how they're going to use protection and how other communities got involved too. It leaves a lot for this task force. Civic Federation. The Women League of Voters. Evidentially, you haven't been doing your job, the Women League of Voters, because you have very poor voting turnouts, specifically in people of color. We play games. We play lots of games, and I wait around to see how this saga is going to be played out. A culture of corruption money is financing it. Mandate? How can you? How can you?</p> <p>The state say we need to do more education in teaching our young people civics when they're the most corrupt themselves. I jotted down a one-party system creates corruption. More parties are better, but the party in power always tries to keep the other party out of power by greed, money, patronage, passing from one generation to another. My daddy was listening to this, then I listen to this, and then my grandson will be listening. The unions do it. The white unions do it. From one generation to another, we steal jobs, so it's all of y'all and us too. Black people, Negro, African American, whatever color they go by now, by being silent, not being in these rooms. Then when they get in these rooms, they feel intimidated, like you don't belong here. I'm quite at home here at this institution. It hits the fan when it comes to public money. Public education. Who's going to use that public bus down south? Who's going to sit where? Public money. I have opportunities how—great God, where you going, George? You don't have any meetings for your city council today or no committee meeting. I was going to just look on that bulletin board, but...naturalization and immigration making our citizens who then obey it, our customs and immigration law.</p> <p>They were swearing them in. There was 44 countries, and only four people was white. Anyway, these people have lived by the process coming into this country, and then you're hypocrites when you...telling me to sit down...and I heard these other people speak. It was going to happen because I'm saying something that you don't want to hear, but that you should hear. That's hypocritical to have a country, a state, a city that's going against our immigration laws. Hypocrites.</p> <p>Sir, you too, sir. You too, sir. I criticize you and that task force. You too, sir. I have not been speaking any longer than anybody else who came up here that you called other people from the school from out there to speak. I'm not in a popularity contest. I don't care what you think about me. It's what I think about me and what I'm trying to do for my community. You should welcome me. I...when I say hypocrites. If you got a custom and you got laws, obey the laws. That's the first thing a good citizen do.</p> <p>I've been heard. The ancestors appropriate me. This was a dog-and-pony show. Just use your eyes, your ears. It's empty. You failed. Try not to continue to fail. When you get a citizen of my caliber up, you give them the same respect that you do everybody else according to the open meetings act. If you don't use three minutes...four for you, three for you, five for you. Hmm-mm.... You be respectful to citizens and the rule of law. You set up a rule</p>	

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	<p>and you also say, if we go over the time, wrap it up. You got a lot of time, but you want me to sit down. I'm not the one. I'm here. I came out here, and I ain't wasting my time.</p> <p>I'm not getting paid as a teacher. I'm not on the Civic Federation or the Women League of Voters being elected or anything. I chose. You can evaluate a person on how he or she spends their time and if it's self-serving. You watch real close. I'm not getting paid one dime. That's what motivates me, how you all manipulate this system and play games with people and then say, Chicago is corrupt. Yes, all of y'all are in it together. It is...[voice fades] on this world a culture of corruption. They got their point of view, and in return, you let somebody else, and you heard me. Good.....[voice fades] Thank you.</p>	
18	<p>Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name's Nisan Chavkin. I'm the executive director of the Constitutional Rights Foundation of Chicago. We've been engaged in this process of civic education for the last four years, working with kids and their teachers from second grade on up through high school. I commend the task force on its work and its recommendations. I come here today just to emphasize two points. The interdependence of all of these recommendations, and the need to fund all these recommendations. By example, I'll speak to three of these principles, these recommendations that focus on professional development. The civics course requirement, the certification requirement, and professional development.</p> <p>I endorse the task force's recommendation to create this civic education class for high schools in our state. It explains and should transcend the simple recite-and-repeat format and integrates lots of exciting participatory options and they can embrace the community. Teachers to help students learn how to talk and to think and to act. That's not, if you heard Lori it's a part of the standard canon for preparing our teachers. The task force addresses this. The fourth recommendation applies to certification and specific training preservice for teachers. That's also welcome because we know that we have this expectation in other disciplines.</p> <p>Few are teaching science in our state. We are charged, your job is specifically to teach physics. You know more about physics more or more about biology or more about chemistry. Civics education is no less sophisticated and demands no less from the teachers and our students. Yet we also have an obligation, as we know, to the teachers who are already out there and the students and communities they serve. They also need the opportunities to learn, and they need support for incorporating what they learn into their classrooms. Even those schoolteachers who use courses this in their classrooms, they too lack the time and the resources so sit up all night designing lessons and researching materials to deal with issues that come up brand new every day in classrooms.</p> <p>The task force then wisely asks in their fifth recommendation for everyone to make sure that in-service training is available for teachers of all sorts and that the General Assembly provide for everyone, both in content and skills. All of that is a great idea. I've spoken of three of these recommendations, but all six, I could say the same for them. They're all necessary, and they all work together. My final point is this. I close with a point directly addressed to the General Assembly, for it is uniquely invested in their power to do this, for no school in Illinois</p>	Nisan Chavkin Executive director, Constitutional Rights Foundation of Chicago

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	<p>needs another mandate without the means and the resources to implement it. Course requirements without the means to fulfill them is a farce. Certification without resources to meet them is a vapor solution.</p> <p>Aligning professional development with standards that are unattainable for all, but the advantaged favors, advantaged districts and teachers in our state, mocks the premise of this democracy. I therefore urge the General Assembly to embrace the work of this task force, to realize all of their recommendations, and to fulfill them with adequate funding so they can be implemented for the welfare of all the students and citizens of Illinois. I recognize that we live in hard fiscal times, but we live in critical democratic times too. Our students have only this one chance for their education, so please let us not let them down.</p>	
19	<p>Thank you, Shawn, and the task force. I'd just like to voice my support to all the recommendations, but certainly to recommendation number one and three. I think we need to make civics and government a requirement in this state so that all of our students are given the opportunity to be civically involved. We need to ensure that the programs in schools of exemplary civic engagement are the norm and not the exception. Mandated civics or government course and service learning can help us close the civic empowerment gap in Illinois. How the course and service learning projects are implemented is just as important as passing the mandate, but we deserve the opportunity to implement a course and projects that would be engaging and allow students to feel empowered, all students to feel empowered. Thank you.</p>	<p>Janice Powzowski Citizen</p>

Willowbrook High School, Villa Park, Illinois, October 13, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
20	<p>I am here to ask the question of what a mandate might look like if it followed the recommendations. Community High School requires that all students pass an American government class in order to graduate. As you know, this is rare in the state of Illinois. This course that we teach at community high school incorporates the six prudent practices of civic education that is cited in the work of the task force. In this one-semester nontrack course, students with varying ability, skill levels, and socioeconomic status, and experiences work together to research, write, and deliberate public policy addressing some of the biggest challenges facing our community in a project-based simulation of the legislative process. Over 50 percent of the student population have participated in, one time or another, in an English as a second language program in their educational career. Many of these students come from countries where civic participation was unsafe. Our required course in American government allows all students to practice the college-readiness skills of reading and writing and speaking while cultivating the skills for effective civic engagement. This course promotes cultural literacy and helps students understand how to influence the institutions that govern our republic. The University of Madison–Wisconsin did a study that followed graduates from our program into their postsecondary career. The research found that students who participated in</p>	<p>Mary Ellen Daneels Teacher, Community High School, Chicago</p>

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	our program were more likely to pay attention to current events in the news, understand more fully the importance of voting, and appreciate difference in opinion. More importantly. The course helped these students feel like their opinions and experiences mattered. It would also prepare students for the work force.	
21	Studies have found that African-American and Latino students are twice more likely than their white counterparts to score below proficient on national civic assessments. Minorities vote at about two thirds of their white counterparts and families that make above 75,000 per year are twice as likely to vote. Research shows that quality civic learning helps minorities perform considerably higher than peers who have not received civic learning. As a Latina, I grew up in a community with a very strong civics program. My senior year of high school, I had a mandatory civics class, with a mandatory service learning requirement. In that class, I acted as an election judge and got to spend the day collecting ballots from people in the community. This experience has led me to my success in life. This includes the civic leadership fellow at U of I at Urbana. I was given the opportunity to go the U of C law school. We are still fighting the battle to get Latino students to register to vote and to understand the importance of participating in democracy. Now as a community lawyer with Citizen Advocacy Center, I spend my days helping educate people about the importance of participating in democracy and how they can participate in democracy. I trace all my success back to those mandatory requirements and the requirement to have a service learning experience.	Andrea Alvourez Citizen Advocacy Center, community lawyer
22	The ACLU wholeheartedly supports all the recommendations. I want to take a minute and talk about three issues that are implicated by these proposals. There needs to be a focus on implementation and making sure it's universal. Got the privilege to visit schools during Constitution Day, a big difference you see in terms of the base of knowledge of the students, about basic civics and about individual liberties, or the constitution. Even when the school has the energy and the commitment of the teachers and the instructors, but even when a school has that, there is often a great distinction between students who participate in an AP government class and people who are simply taking a course to check a box. What we give in terms of this education needs to be standardized. Civics is much more than learning about geography. We are especially pleased with the recommendation that has to do with increasing student and youth involvement in the electoral process. I think that is a desirable and commendable goal, but I hope we don't limit that to the political process and electoral campaigns. There are issues that affect students' lives, their education, their future, funding for their future work. Most decisions about curriculum will be left up to local officials. It is really essential that this curriculum examines the critical role of individual rights and the independence of the judiciary.	Ed Yohnka Director of Communications in Public Policy, American Civil Liberties Union
23	My six children attended public schools and they did not have the opportunity to participate in civic engagement. I understand the urgency of civic participation. That is why I have been an active community leader for the past 24 years. There are approximately 8,000 students who attend Morton East. 87 percent of Latinos attend district 201 and 89	Delia Banajas Mother of 6 and grandmother of 12

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	percent come from low-income families. A required civics engagement course for Illinois is crucial to promote ideas about democracy and give students a democratic voice to engage on issues where they are not treated with respect or dignity from the status quo. A civics education course in Cicero would give students the opportunity to engage on having equity education and more credit hours to enter universities. Teachers should have numerous hours of P.D.(professional development) and an independent board assessment should be completed quarterly. Lastly, I think Illinois should include a civic engagement course for high school and middle school students.	
24	Started thinking about what's going on in our country and how civics and history are being watered down. I am just a concerned citizen who's worried about my grandchildren, whose worried about my country. My main concern for coming today is the emphasis on civics and history in our schools and colleges. Just today, I heard on the radio, only 18 percent of colleges require a history course to graduate. Well, how can we send our kids out to the world like this? We have an obligation to turn out patriotic Americans. In my opinion, this is not possible without teaching American history and what sacrifice it took to create this great nation. Water down our history and you will have an apathetic populace.	Mike Madia Concerned citizen; read article in <i>Herald</i> newspaper about meeting
25	Our mission statement encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy, and influence public policy through education and advocacy. This statement is similar to the task force's definition of civic education. We embrace these recommendations in their totality. The League of Women's Voters just completed mock elections at 14 public schools. This was accomplished with the endorsement of [the] regional superintendent. We volunteered at these schools and worked with the social studies staff to carry out their plan. This went from having elections just during the lunch period to having every social study student come down and cast a ballot. This October 7th, many students learned the mechanics of voting, but voting is but one marker of civic engagement. We know classes on civic engagement were cut because they are not part of areas tested. In the real world, however, we are tested every day. Citizens need to understand their role and the many different units of government to find help for themselves and their communities, to work with organizations and to set priorities.	Jan Dorner Parent
26	Fiscal comment. Reconsider what really needs to be addressed. How much is it going to cost? Is funding universally recognized as a problem for these programs? This is something the task force should keep in mind going forward.	Ray Kielminski Community member; parent
27	Hello, my name is Shannon and I am a senior at Grayslake North High School. I'd like to first thank all members of the Illinois Task Force and everyone here today for allowing me to share how civic education has impacted my life. I am very glad to be here today as a supporter of the work and recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education.	Shannon Senior, Grayslake North High School



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	<p>When I enrolled in a civics course called Public Service Practicum at the start of my junior year of high school, I didn't realize how much I didn't know about myself, my community, and our government. Naturally, I'm an introvert. Because of this, I didn't know many students in the class. It was not until midsemester did I realize how much I have changed in terms of social interactions. Bit by bit, my peers and my teacher encouraged me to emerge from my timid nature into something more. When I received support for my ideas, it empowered me to talk about what is most important to me and expand my horizons. The power of civic education is for students to discover their true passions, and most of all, to explore their true role and power in society.</p> <p>Students who are more informed of how their government works are more likely to participate in government, including voting in elections. In our school, over 30 students combined from government and PSP volunteered to be an election judge. The 30 students volunteered because they are interested in learning how an election works. Voting in elections is just one way to be politically active. Last year, two students from my civics class decided to create an advocacy campaign for their project. They encouraged other students to sign a petition in support of a bill that would make anti-bullying laws stricter in Illinois, and the other student created a proposal to increase funding for early education programs. To see other students engage in this advocacy work made me realize that anyone can make a difference on policies that impact our lives.</p> <p>Students who take a civic education course will help themselves to develop and apply critical thinking skills for college and for careers. Regardless of what path a student may take after graduation, they will be able to apply what they have learned in the course for the rest of their lives. It all starts with what happens in the classroom. In our school's U.S. history classes, a civic engagement options paper is required for completion. For the assignment, students are required to choose a few service events from a list and type a letter thanking the organizer of the event. Not all students may be thrilled with the assignment, but they might discover something that they like about public service and could become more motivated to reach out and help out in their community. This helps prepare them for new opportunities beyond high school.</p> <p>Most students who graduate from high school who have not taken a civic education course will not know how the government works and how they can get involved in their community. Without having taken advantage of the opportunities provided at my high school, I would not have known how to professionally interact with leaders in my community, how to have the confidence to express my ideas in public speaking, or how to be a leader myself on issues that I feel passionate about. I may never have had the courage to engage in challenging opportunities or have had the strength to be a leader to make our world a better place.</p> <p>I feel very fortunate to have been a part of a civic education course and attend a school that supports civic education. These experiences have changed the way I see the world around me and the way the world sees me. In closing, I'd like to thank the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education for their work and for giving me the opportunity to express my support for civic education for all students in Illinois. All students, whoever they are, can make a difference.</p>	

**Willowbrook High School, Villa Park, Illinois, October 13, 2014**

	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Name and Role</b>
28	<p>Hello, My name is Parker and I am also a senior at Grayslake North High School. I am honored to speak to the Illinois Task Force on today's topic of civic education. To me, the importance of civic education is rooted in a community of people working together to create a strong presence of student involvement. This involvement is not required, but chosen freely by students who want to make a difference.</p> <p>As Shannon mentioned earlier, our students are given the privilege and choice to enroll in our Public Service class at Grayslake North. This class encourages students to build communication skills and business skills as they prepare to enter into a career or a secondary education program after graduating from Grayslake North. Being a prior student of Public Service Practicum, I am proud to say that I feel more confident sharing my ideas and becoming involved in my community and my government. These skills also help create a more successful completion of the final project for this class. Our "passion project," or student lead project, is the culmination and application of all of the skills that we learned. Being able to approach and partner with companies in our community, to help an organization or cause that we are passionate about, is an opportunity I wish all my peers could experience. While practicing civic education, we can do just that. Even students not enrolled in our Public Service class can do this on their own. Giving students the opportunity to create their own passion project encourages kids to become knowledgeable about today's current events through research and hard work. It gives students the ability to find their passion and build communication skills with people who share the same passion. It demonstrates true leadership and grit that all students should feel compelled to have. And most importantly, it allows young people to change the world.</p> <p>Shannon also touched on the activeness of some of our students with the elections occurring in our community and throughout Illinois, another great example of the overwhelming amount of student leadership present at Grayslake North. After speaking with some of my fellow students, they are excited to become involved in their local community politics. It gives students the privilege of understanding how our government works, outside the context of our textbooks. Students feel empowered to share their own voice and realize that their voice is being heard—another great opportunity that practicing civic education brings to students.</p> <p>Grayslake North was honored to receive the title of a democracy school this past month. Grayslake North is a place where there is an unspoken positive energy, and this energy is created because of the respect that the students and staff share with each other. It is important that all teachers, no matter what they teach, reflect democratic values and practices. My teachers really try to incorporate student lead activities into our curriculum, giving us, as students, the ability to share our thoughts and share our voice. Teachers who encourage students to partake in debates, discussions, and seminars are indirectly informing students that their voice is heard, and that is important. This is one of the great qualities that comes with being a democracy school. Another democratic attribute that Grayslake North provides students like me is the ability to pursue our interests. Whether that be through Ping-Pong</p>	Parker, Senior, Grayslake North



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	Comments	Name and Role
	<p>Club, or tennis, students at Grayslake North are given the opportunity and are encouraged to partake in a wide variety of extracurricular activities. What makes a great school is a place that molds students into being passionate and well-rounded students. Giving kids that encouragement they need to become great people inside and outside the classroom is one of the most important things a school can do for its students. This creates diversity and value to our school as a whole, and I'm proud to be part of a school that celebrates the whole student in this way.</p> <p>For students to feel motivated to become civic leaders, they must feel comfortable sharing their thoughts with their peers, their community, and their government. Schools should encourage positive involvement both in and out of the classroom. This will help create well-rounded students, which is the key to practicing civic and democratic education.</p> <p>I am proud and privileged to be inspired by an educational community that takes the time to connect with me as a whole person, not just a student. My school has encouraged me to "be the change I want to see in the world," to be compassionate, and to never settle for anything less than my best, both as a student and as a human being.</p> <p>Once again, I thank you for letting me share my thoughts and opinions on the importance of civic education in today's society. Thank you.</p>	
29	<p>Good afternoon. My name is Emily Weiss. I'm a social studies teacher at Grayslake North High School, where I'm very proud of our culture of civic engagement and of both students who spoke today. I believe the greatest power of public education is to prepare young people to become more engaged, more active, and more responsible citizens in our communities.</p> <p>Thank you to the task force for hosting these hearings and for offering the public an opportunity to voice opinions and to engage in this important conversation. I am here today to support the work of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education and I want to speak particularly to my support of recommendations three and five. I have had the opportunity to incorporate service learning opportunities and project-based learning within all of the courses that I teach. Currently, that includes U.S. history and the civics course the students mentioned, Public Service Practicum. I've been able to utilize resources and attend professional development seminars led by incredible groups that are located in the Chicago area, including Mikva Challenge, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, and Chicago Metro History Education Center. The resources and trainings have equipped me with the knowledge and skills that have allowed me to have civics come alive in my classroom, knocking down the walls of the classroom and bringing the students really connected to community resources and community leadership. It is an exciting and meaningful experience when students discover and explore their own ideas and passions and learn how to turn those ideas and passions into action.</p> <p>A standalone civics course, like the one I teach, allows students the time to do meaningful research and planning to complete service learning projects that are truly student-led—with long-term significance for the school, for</p>	Emily Weiss Social studies teacher, Grayslake North

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	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Name and Role</b>
	the student, and the community. It is important that students are given the building blocks of how to conduct research and coordinate long-term projects and other coursework as well in social studies and beyond. The Chicago Metro History fair and the national history day project has provided students with the solid groundwork to become familiar with their community history, leadership, civic organizations. It allows them to build their knowledge and skills as they start on their own journey to become informed citizens and thoughtful about their local communities. For me and my students, this has proven to be a very solid foundation for taking responsible citizenship to the next level. Thank you for allowing the public to give input today. I am proud to be here with students who are empowered to share their own stories and passions for getting involved as responsible citizens in our democracy.	
30	I am not going to post statistics because you have heard all that before, but I am going to share a few experiences. Civic education is one of the earliest goals of this country, we have unfortunately lost sight of that, it is crucial that civic education has a focus in all Illinois schools. With all the emphasis on STEM, the social studies curriculum has been deemphasized; if it's not tested, it is not taught. Students have natural curiosity about current events, they want to know how the world works and why people behave the way they do. A civics and government course can tap into that natural curiosity and lead students to ask more questions and seek out more answers as they become informed and engaged members of their communities. Service learning projects coupled with a 21st century curriculum will put students on a path to lifelong student engagement. In addition to the knowledge and service, children need the skills to apply information. All schools in Illinois should be democracy schools. All of us regardless of our profession, we the people are citizens and members of our community.	Sharon Smojer Teacher, Carmel Catholic Democracy High School
31	Civic education should be readily available to everyone, it shouldn't matter where you came from or who you are. We all are here and if takes a mandate, then we need it. This so important to all of us, especially the children.	Susan Mueller Teacher and social science department chair, democracy school

<b>Laphier High School, Springfield, Illinois, October 13, 2014</b>		
	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Name and Role</b>
32	I have read the report of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education and agree that there is a need for more emphasis on civics education. However, I do not believe that this emphasis should come in the form of an additional high school graduation requirement.	Cindy Stover Career and technical

Laphier High School, Springfield, Illinois, October 13, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
	<p>A study by American Educational Research Association that was recently posted on the scientific blog <i>Science 2.0</i> states that raising graduation requirements often has unintended consequences of increasing the dropout rate. In addition, raising requirements rarely results in increased achievement, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In looking at PSAT trend data in math from 2006 to 2012, during which time the math graduation requirement was raised, the additional course mandate has had no positive impact on standardized test scores. The same can be said for language arts.</p> <p>The dropout rate in Illinois has been between 16 and 20 percent during the last three years. Dropouts are less likely to be a competent and responsible citizen. Illinois already has 16 to 20 out of 100 students dropping out of high school. Another course requirement could increase this already unacceptable number.</p> <p>As stated in your recommendations, civics education is multidisciplinary. For example, many CTE program areas of agriculture, business, family and consumer sciences, health occupations and trades, industrial and engineering have civics education embedded in the curriculum. Students in building trades must work with city hall to obtain building permits and must be familiar with BOCA codes, just to name one example. These courses also have student organization components such as FFA, FBLA, FCCLA, Skills USA, and HOSA. Students in these organizations volunteer, participate in fundraising, and support community projects. This is also done in other clubs in both high school and middle school.</p> <p>If graduation requirements were raised, there would be one less time period for students to take an elective course, which includes courses in career and technical education. These courses are where students learn valuable work skills so that they can become gainfully employed at a respectable wage and would then be more likely to become a competent responsible citizen. According to the Gates Foundation, CTE students are more likely to complete high school. Please do not take away a class period in which students can choose a CTE course or other elective. Unemployment in Illinois is already high, even though there are thousands of jobs that are going unfilled because people lack the skills to fill them. Again, these skills are taught in career and technical education courses.</p> <p>Illinois high school students are currently required to take two years of social studies courses in order to graduate from high school. Civics education could become part of that two years course requirement.</p> <p>Students and schools seem to be overly mandated already. Mandating requirements cannot address all of society's ills. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 17 percent of children ages 2 to 19 are obese. The American Diabetes Association states that 25 percent of Americans under the age of 20 have type 2 diabetes. These are alarming statistics. Will nutrition education be the next course that will be required? Again, I agree that more emphasis should be put on civics education, but not by adding an additional graduation requirement.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>	education

<b>Laphier High School, Springfield, Illinois, October 13, 2014</b>		
	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Name and Role</b>
33	I don't really have an opinion to offer, but I do want to offer us (Serve Illinois) as a resource. It's our mission to promote volunteerism around the state and support community service for Illinois citizens. We do this through the AmeriCorps program. Again, we would like to offer up our commission as a resource.	Scott McFarland Executive director, Serve Illinois
34	I have not taken a position in term of pros or cons on any particular points, but I just wanted to emphasize what I see as the decline in civic preparedness. Eighteen- and 20-year-olds that don't understand the difference between the three branches of government. These students often have a great distaste for government. But they often have a strong opinion on parties and officeholders, and when I try to figure out how they come upon those strong opinions, I've discovered they often come upon them through TV, campaign ads, et cetera. I've also discovered that they have a reduced ability to sort out facts from fiction, and that worries me. This can lead to electing officials who are not very good at their jobs. More civic education can help alleviate this.	Chris Mooney University of Illinois Public Affairs

<b>Carbondale High School, Carbondale, Illinois, November 6, 2014</b>		
	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Name and Role</b>
35	<p>My name is Rob Werden and I am the director of the Madison County Career and Technical Education System. I am in my 21st year of being an educator, 18 years of which were spent in the agricultural education classroom. Thank you for allowing me to testify here today. My first reaction when I heard of the Illinois Task Force on Civics Education was "Great! There is a need for our students to be more knowledgeable about their elected officials and how our government works." I am also an elected official for the township in which I live. We constantly face criticism of how and why we spend tax dollars and why this road gets the snow plowed first, or when this annoying pothole will be filled. We are probably the lowest rung on the governmental ladder. Most people only call us when things go wrong. They know little of all of the good things we do for the community as well. So I agree that students need to learn more about all of our governing bodies.</p> <p>However, having been in both the education and legislative arenas, I can testify to the fact that there is a right way and a wrong way to achieve the results that we all can agree need to be achieved. Mandating a third year of social studies is the wrong way to achieve these results. Mandates rarely achieve the desired results of which they were intended. Our math scores have slightly declined since the implementation of the mandated third year of math in Illinois high schools. Many times, these mandates have unintended consequences. One such risk with this particular suggested mandate would be a decrease in the number of students who are able to take a CTE course. Career and technical education courses are hands-on learning classes such as agriculture, business, health occupations, family and consumer education, and industrial technology classes. You may know them as vocational classes. These are the classes that keep students engaged, learning, and in school.</p>	Rob Werden Director, Madison County Career and Technical Education System

Carbondale High School, Carbondale, Illinois, November 6, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
	<p>These are the classes where real-world experiences are given to the students. These are the classes where students learn how to become productive members of society. And, yes, we teach civics in CTE classes.</p> <p>My FFA students have won awards, traveled across this great country to places like Mt. Rushmore and Washington D.C., and are currently elected officials conducting meetings using the same parliamentary procedures I taught them in the classroom.</p> <p>My point is that we need to focus on what is being taught in the social studies classes that we are currently teaching. We do not need another social studies class mandated from the state that will not accomplish what it sets out to do. We do not need more students dropping out of high school, which is a very real possibility if this course is mandated. We do need to leave room in students' schedules for them to be able to take elective courses that will allow them to build career successes and learn their role in our society. They will also learn that part of their role is to become active in the governing bodies that affect their lives.</p>	
36	<p>I am here today to share in the concern about the mandate. Many of our schools and many of our students are already taking that third year of social studies in an effort to get into schools. I do know and have seen in studies on the impact of mandates as far as dropout rates go, particularly in inner city schools. I am 98 percent on board on everything that you said here, my only real concern is that third year social studies requirement.</p>	<p>Brian Gordon Director, Three Rivers Education Employment System, Joliet</p>
37	<p>One thing I wanted to address was the issue of mandates. There are a lot of different types of mandates (i.e., unfunded mandates). When someone hears the word <i>mandate</i>, especially in the field of education, people start getting defensive. Many of the things we are looking for are not difficult to achieve and are not costly, such as the service requirement. One of things I would like to stress, again, is the reasonability of the individual school district to determine how the mandate is met. There are already programs existing in schools that kids are doing already. For instance, a school might say that Eagle Scout service provides a waiver. I am not saying that is the way it will be, but that the decision ultimately rests with the schools or local district. A lot of the things we are looking at align with the Common Core. Common Core is required in Illinois at this time, so in many ways what we are asking for is already required, albeit a different format. I wanted to speak specifically to news literacy, because that was my particular interest on the task force. News literacy is a critical issue. News literacy in a nutshell is teaching people to be better consumers of news. Students often receive information from the news, but can't always articulate where that news is coming from. If they don't have the tools that they need to determine where the source of the news is coming from then they are prone to manipulation. One thing we want to archive with news literacy is to get students to take personal responsibility regarding the news. Studies have shown that students who take news literacy courses are more likely to vote and more likely to be involved in their communities.</p>	<p>David Porter Illinois Civic Education Task Force Member</p>

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	Comments	Name and Role
38	<p>Early in my career as a lawyer, I spent 12 years doing trial work. For the last 18 years, been a professor of law. I wanted to address the issue from the perspective of a lawyer. In our society, when someone commits a crime, we bring that person before a jury of 12 citizens of the community where the crime was committed, and we ask those citizens of the community if, beyond reasonable doubt, the person is guilty. Likewise, when there is a civil dispute, people come to the courthouse for a peaceable resolution. We don't use vigilantes, we don't have secret police. We rely on fellow citizens. That means our fellow citizens need to give up time from work and family to serve as jurors. The question is, why would they if they have no understanding of our legal system or the role of our courts? Where do we think they are going to gain that understanding? We need citizens who are willing to be witnesses of the court, to call the police, to report crimes or suspicious activity. We, in Illinois, elect judges, and we need good, wise, and fair judges. So we need citizens who understand the role of courts. So my question is, where do we think citizens gain these understandings? Parents, community leaders, teachers have to help our youth understand how our government works and more importantly to inspire them to develop the attitude of good active citizenship. So I support these recommendations, I generally oppose mandates, but with the forces that direct funding and testing such as science and math, it seems to me that we need legislation, we need a mandate to be a countervailing force.</p>	Susan Schmitz Lawyer
39	<p>I remember growing up at Galena High School. I had an ag teacher there, and one of the requirements was to bring in a news article, and that news article was something that was pertaining to the food and fiber industry, and I remember how important it was to read the local newspaper and being engaged with the local community. As I was teaching as well, civics was important as far as agricultural education goes—making students aware of who their legislators were, who their local farm county bureau manager was. We did participate with these folks and had meetings with them. And, again, that is a big part of ag education, which is one of the five areas of CTE. A lot of different programs are a part of ag education (i.e., FFA). There is a mock parliamentary procedure career development event where students run a mock meeting. I am a little fearful as far as an additional graduate requirement goes. My recommendation is that before we go too much further in asking for another required class and a teacher who may or may not be fully experienced—so just because we have another course doesn't necessarily mean it will be effective. So my recommendation is let's partner together and look to see as far as what ag education has to offer, what FFA has to offer, what the current leadership in CTE have to offer, and maybe we can partner together to solve the inadequacy of civic education in our schools.</p>	Dean Ditmar Former teacher, high school agriculture
40	<p>Good evening. My name is Jamie Nash-Mayberry. I am from and live in Cobden, Illinois, and have been a social science teacher for the past six years at Shawnee High School located in Wolf Lake, Illinois. I have read over the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education recommendations, and overall I agree with them. As a teacher, I've seen the enormous benefits firsthand that civics classes and service projects have on the students, the school, and their community. I do have one suggestion for improvement, however. Let me explain-For the past five years, my</p>	Jamie Nash-Mayberry Social science teacher, Shawnee High School, Wolf



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	Comments	Name and Role
	<p>students have participated in many civic learning opportunities. Many of them I created as the teacher, such as mock trials and elections, and others arose out of necessity such as our levee project. Our district sits entirely in the floodplain and is surrounded by deteriorating river levees. In fact, researchers at SIUC have called them ticking time bombs. My students and I have raised awareness of their condition, helped raise funds for fixing some of their infrastructure, and also studied issues connected to flooding. In fact, two weeks ago I testified in a civil suit regarding flooding against the Army Corps in federal court in East St. Louis, and my seniors in government accompanied me. We have gained even national attention with our projects. For my master's in curriculum and instruction with the social science focus, I did my practicum over the levee project in order to see what impacts it had on the students. I found that students who are involved in the levee project develop a strong sense of their own agency. They even continue to give back whether that be sandbagging during floods or even other areas such as how one former student recently organized a parade for aa classmate coming home from the military. The ongoing project even improved community relations. The levee district commissioners now come to the students for help when trying to solve flooding issues.</p> <p>The students know the power of the pen, the value of freedom of speech, who their representatives are, and politicians even reference the students when passing bills in Congress. And the benefits of this civics project could go on and on. But, one question I asked my former students during any practicum was how did it affect the project in that most of it was never for a grade in class, and most of the activities were purely voluntary. They responded that it made it more real-world, because in life you don't get grades for being civically involved, and that because it wasn't mandatory, it made the project more genuine.</p> <p>My suggestion therefore is that while you should encourage all teachers, and perhaps even make it mandatory for them to create service learning projects, it should not be mandatory for all the students. Basically, the teacher should create service learning opportunities and then hope that her students seize those opportunities. One more example: I recently helped build an outdoor classroom at our school. As our deadline was quickly approaching, we announced on the school speaker that we were in desperate need of help. Many students rose to the occasion, staying until dark several nights, and coming in one Saturday morning to finish it up. Those that helped then received applause at the ribbon cutting. They were full of pride and I know will cherish their work for years to come. However, had we told all the students they <i>had</i> to stay after and help, I fear there would have been disgruntled students, parents complaining about there being no bus to bring them home at dark, and civically, the lesson would have been lost. The students wouldn't be doing the service project for the betterment of the school, community, and beyond, but rather to get an A.</p> <p>In fact, in my early years with the levee project, I occasionally would make the mistake of making a project mandatory such as writing the politicians. And yes, while most were nice letters, I could always count on one or two that said such things as "Don't fix our levees, let this school wash away." Don't worry, I didn't send those. And yet,</p>	Lake



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	Comments	Name and Role
	I know they truly didn't feel that way, so I am led to believe it was them upset that I had made the service project mandatory. Again, I hope you implement these recommendations the task force has developed while taking caution to the wording of the one on service projects. I think it's great what you are all doing, and I hope you are successful!	
41	<p>I agree that there is a need for emphasis on civics education. However, I do not believe that this emphasis should come in the form of an additional high school graduation requirement. I believe the content already exists in a well-taught U.S. history, government, and consumer economics course that has extracurricular activities to supplement the classroom. I know this was the case in the school where I taught. Students registered to vote during a special school registration, they assisted with elections, attended city council meetings, wrote letters to legislators and other elected officials, completed service learning projects, visited courtrooms, volunteered in political campaigns, listened to countless guest speakers such as congressmen, senators, mayors, state legislators, and local city officials. They also wrote and presented bills and ran for election in the state capitol building through the Youth in Government program. All this without a civics course but with a faculty that understood the importance of civic learning and helped present it to the students across the curriculum.</p> <p>Will adding a course fix the problem? Math scores have deviated less than 2 percent from the mean over the past four decades. According to PSAT trend data, additional mandates have had no positive impact on standardized test scores. While math scores have shown little deviation, language arts scores have shown a significant decline since the advent of an additional language arts requirement. A recent study by the American Educational Research Association states that raising graduation requirements often has unintended consequences of increasing the dropout rate. The dropout rate in Illinois has been between 16 and 20 percent during the last three years. Dropouts are less likely to be competent and responsible citizens. Another course requirement could increase this already unacceptable number.</p> <p>If graduation requirements were raised, there would be one less time period for students to take an elective course, which includes career and technical education. These courses are where students learn valuable work skills so that they can become gainfully employed and can be more likely to become conscientious citizens. According to the Gates Foundation, career and technical education students are more likely to complete high school. This statement is based on countless studies and supporting data. "81 percent of high school dropouts said they would have been less likely to do so if there were more opportunities for experiential learning"—a quote from the Guardian of Democracy report used in this Task Force Report. Career and technical education is the definition of experiential learning. Please do not take away a class period in which students can choose a career and technical education course or other elective. We have to keep students in school if they are going to learn about civics or any other required course content. Another course requirement would also limit dual credit and AP course opportunities, which will cost parents more money when paying for college.</p> <p>As stated in your recommendations, civics education should be multidisciplinary. Business education has civics learning embedded in its curriculum. Consumer economics, business law, business management,</p>	Ethel Holladay Executive director, Illinois Business Education Association

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	<p>entrepreneurship, cooperative education, and, yes, even keyboarding courses can have civics training: My students were required to type a letter to a legislator. Computer training is a major component of the business education curriculum, and we all know how important that is, no matter what occupation you enter.</p> <p>The business curriculum has several student organization components, such as Future Business Leaders of America, Distributive Education Clubs of America, Business Professionals Association, and Skills USA. Students in these organizations volunteer, participate in fundraising, and support community projects. They work in committees, run meetings using parliamentary procedure, run for office and learn firsthand about the democratic process. They offer service learning projects with city councils, community service organizations, and chambers of commerce. All career and technical education student organizations have similar programs.</p> <p>Unemployment in Illinois is already high, even though there are thousands of jobs that are going unfilled because people lack the skills to fill them. Again, these skills are taught in business and other career and technical education courses. Mandating requirements cannot address all of society's ills—there is not enough time in the day. No matter what we do in the classroom, students will learn far more by the example set in the home situation. We must have the support of parents to achieve any of the goals we set for our students. I urge you to reconsider adding an additional graduation requirement to an already crowded curriculum. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this issue.</p>	
42	<p>I would just like to share with you all some of the opportunities that I have had at Carbondale to get a civics education. AP government here we get to go on an internship, opportunity to go on a trip to DC. This is huge because not everything can be learned from the books, hands-on to really learn stuff—it's a great opportunity we have. We get to understand how the government works and intern with a representative. It's very important to have this opportunity. An opportunity like this should be available in all schools to some degree. As for the mandatory civics course, I believe this is very important to have. We have mandates here for other courses that, depending on your career, may never use. In America, everyone gets to vote, everyone gets a chance to be part of this democracy. You can't be a good citizen without knowing how things work. It seems irresponsible to not have everyone informed, especially when this is something people will have for the rest of their lives.</p>	Senior, Carbondale High School <sup>a</sup>
43	<p>I took summer government, great class. We take a lot of classes that might not be relevant to our careers, but are relevant to society. We learned about the three branches of government and how everything works and had mock elections, we have a lot of hands-on activities that showed us why we did things and how we did things, and it just seems really important that students get the opportunity to learn this stuff. And I think a civics requirement would be a really good thing because if it is not required, a lot of students won't take it and miss out. And a lot people don't vote because they don't know what to do.</p>	Senior, Carbondale High School <sup>a</sup>

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	Comments	Name and Role
44	Today, I feel like I am hearing two things in the discussion. One, of course, is about civics engagement and another was brought up by a member of the panel that I fear will be lost in some of these conversations is another issue around civics literacy or news literacy. I want to make sure when the references are made in the document and I am referring to specifically to page 30 of the report, Common Core is at least mentioned several times, it is mentioned in vague terms around the skills that are in Common Core, there are some specifics on page 30 that talk about the recommendations and specifics such as having children read the Declaration of Independence, Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, et cetera. We need to make sure students are literate in civics, and that means being able to analyze, corroborate, and synthesize multiple conflicting sources. What I don't want to be lost in this conversation is making sure students have those skills. Although these are mentioned in the Common Core standards, we need to make sure what is taught has depth and not just breadth. One thing I want to make sure that is also clarified is around teachers. We need an assessment system that supports this; right now, the content test in Illinois is content-driven. And so, when I have to make evaluations or reports on my preservice teachers, it's all based on content, whether or not they can regurgitate the information. So that test has to be revised if we want teachers to be prepared to engage students. So I want to make sure those assessments are taken care of, I want to make sure the constitution test is taken care of in way that is not just memorization of names and dates. I don't see recommendations for those two specific things.	Faculty, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
45	The issue is not CTE versus social studies. The service learning portion sounds good. I am concerned about the mandate. Personal story of one my students. Student had the opportunity to go to DC this year through Washington Training and Leadership Institute. This was something he instigated and came from his own effort and knowledge of how government works thorough his social studies classes here. This student called congressmen, talked to aides, and set the entire thing up, which is something that can't happen through this service piece.	Dallas Teacher, Carbondale
46	I came here to represent student council, but after hearing everyone speak, I also want to represent Key Club—an international student-led service learning organization. And I have the biggest passion through Key Club for service learning. We have done at least 10 service projects in the last three weeks and more and more every year kids are getting more active as the club grows. But I think the problem of why more kids don't want to serve is because they are not learning it when they are younger, it's a cultural thing. For something to become normal, you have to instill it in students when they are younger. And if kids when they are younger did these service learning projects, it would become a cultural norm. It's about the change we can make. Through my position, able to go to California over the summer for a national convention, and we talked about global change, global service projects, and we will be holding a service fair so more students can learn about these opportunities. Yet I still fear that students won't appreciate it because it is not the norm. In regards to this extra requirement, when we started doing math requirements, we were very young, so we expected to have math and science requirements. So the younger	Student, Carbondale Community High School

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	we instill this in children, the more it will be a part of their expectations. And some the classes that have made me think the hardest are my social studies classes.	
47	<p>It's tough to say mandate. We saw a lawyer come up and talk about reasonable doubt. Can you doubt the reasonableness of this mandate? Sure. But I don't. Mandate this, if you have to mandate a full year, I would. Everything we do when we talk about citizenship are about rights and responsibilities—that's the definition of civics. We try to do that here at Carbondale to the best of our abilities, and I think service learning can be done from inside the school. When you take on responsibilities, a lot of power comes with it, but you are also traversing the knowledge. We have great vocational education here, but you know what, those vocational students, you know what classes they like the best, their social studies classes, because there is the hands, there is the discussion, there is the debate. We have to put right and responsibilities into our students' heads no matter the school. I think if you attack it early enough, we can change where we are going, and I applaud your efforts.</p>	Michael Butler Social studies teacher, Carbondale High School
48	<p>Every school needs to have a civics class. It's very important that we students know how to be an outstanding citizen, and learn things about our country. When I heard there was going to be a civics class at our school, I automatically signed up for it. I am so glad I did, because it has taught me about how important our rights are and why we should try to be the best that we can be.</p> <p>In my civics class we have learned about homelessness. It is amazing how many people are homeless, including in our school district. We've also learned about voting, amendments, foreign policies, poverty, and the Bill of Rights. I barely knew anything about these different things and now I could write you a whole essay about these things. We have not only been doing these activities in class, but we also have been doing projects outside of the classroom. We have constructed an outdoor classroom, worked on saving the levees that surround our school, and participated in the Beta Club Giving Tree for Christmas where you buy presents for kids who can't afford much. Also, this year the seniors and some underclassmen are doing a mock trial. The mock trial lets you know what it is really like when you have to go to court. Since my class will be seniors during the year of the presidential election, we will get to do a mock election. I am excited for that. Because of all these things, our school was named a democracy school. All of these things I've learned in and out of the classroom help me to be aware of what the real world is like, the rights that I have, that my opinion does matter, and finally how to be a better citizen.</p>	Abbey—Student, Shawnee High School, Wolf Lake
49	<p>I am a student at Shawnee High School. I am a member of student government, FFA, and the veteran's wall committee. I believe that civic projects really teach us about the world beyond the school playground, so to speak. I learn many great things such as becoming a great citizen all the way to learning how to vote. One really important thing I learned from civics is how to come together as a community and get things done to make an overall difference.</p> <p>That is truly what civics has taught me the most is that our school that we grow up in is like a community and learning about civics has taught me how to give back to the community we have. I think if everyone could learn</p>	Hunter, Student, Shawnee High School, Wolf Lake

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	Comments	Name and Role
	more on how to give back, they would try. I think this is all very important because if we give back we can give the same or an even better experience than we had as teenagers.	
50	<p><i>[Written comment from student who did not want to speak aloud at the hearing. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation were kept as written.]</i></p> <p>Student Government has helped me develop my leadership skills and has shown me what kind of effort and planning goes into some of the events that take place at the school. I have also learned much about team-work, and what can happen if you work as a team to accomplish your goals. Some of the things we have accomplished are a “Blue Out” which happened during March to show support for Colin [sic] Cancer. The Student Government has aided in the efforts to get the pledge back into the Shawnee district, as well as promote [sic] Patriotism.</p>	Student, Shawnee High School, Wolf Lake <sup>a</sup>
51	<p><i>[Written comment from student who did not want to speak aloud at the hearing. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation were kept as written.]</i></p> <p>Throughout this school year, I have gone on many trips that have really taken the classroom above and beyond the average desk and white board. On these Civics trips, we refer to them as school-farm trips, we visited places like a buffalo farm, Prairie Farms’ packaging facility, and even the Neighborhood Co-op in Carbondale, Illinois. Through all of these trips, I learned what it was like to live in the real world and to own and operate a business in today’s society. In addition, we also took several trips to two Federal Courthouses, one in St. Louis Missouri, and the other in East St. Louis, Illinois. From these trips, we learned a lot about how the law is upheld and even how our country is ran. In short, with all the Civics related activities, we have become more than just students, we have even planned on building a Veteran’s Memorial. We are not just students any longer, we are students with a purpose.</p>	Student, Shawnee High School, Wolf Lake <sup>a</sup>
52	<p><i>[Written comment from student who did not want to speak aloud at the hearing. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation were kept as written.]</i></p> <p>Civics class has taught me a lot of things I had never even stopped to think about before. It has allowed me to do a lot of hands-on things that have helped me more than I could’ve imagined. I have learned so much about how civics-related projects actually have quite a big impact on people and places surrounding us. For example, we took a trip to SIU college to meet with some very high up people who had learned of our struggle with the bad levees. Through the efforts of civics class, we successfully spread awareness throughout the countries surrounding our school district, and with the help of that field trip, found new, more effective ways to educate others. We also got the chance to start helping elementary school kids in their classroom, and that’s a really wonderful experience. Civics class has taught me the importance of helping others, and the positive things that come from giving back to my community.</p>	Student, Shawnee High School <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Name was not given.

## Appendix C. Online Public Comments Regarding the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education

Public Input Received From the Period of October 1–10, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
1	<p>I applaud the desire of the committee to elevate the importance of Civics education in our schools. However it should not come in the form of a mandated additional course unless previous mandates for additional “core” area courses are repealed. The additional core course mandates have shown no positive correlation with increased standardized test scores (ACT data). The well intentioned mandates are in fact harmful to students as they limit their ability to take elective Career and Technical Education courses which reinforce (and have been shown to increase test scores) the importance and relevance of math, technical reading, and critical thinking.</p> <p>Ironically, the highly prescriptive nature of our educational system is especially harmful to those it is trying to “help.” The majority of us would agree our population is in desperate need of a better understanding of the workings of our nation’s government. They would also agree we are in desperate need of a better understanding of financial management and budgeting. Is that the next mandate? Please consider requiring embedding this into existing curriculum or removing other ineffective mandates to leave room for students to take elective coursework.</p>	<p>Brian Gordon, Director Three Rivers Education For Employment System</p>
2	<p>I will not be able to attend any of the hearings you are providing for public comment, so I am writing instead. I am a retired early childhood teacher, and a grandmother of Illinois students. As such, I agree that all students should learn their responsibilities as citizens but I think that they are already doing that—within the social sciences standards, within the behavior programs such as “Character Counts,” and with community involvement in the schools, such as the League of Women Voters’ mock elections for students to learn how to vote. My problem is with the <b>mandating</b> of civics classes. There are already too many unfunded mandates out there, and I didn’t notice anyone in the report saying that the state is going to allocate any extra dollars!!! It’s wonderful that people want kids to learn specifically about citizen participation, but it would be more wonderful if your task force simply provided school districts with information on best practices, and suggestions as to good resources and programs. For free. And then you could let the experts (teachers, principals, curriculum coordinators) figure it out.</p> <p>As a teacher who came of age during the Civil Rights era, I have always been suspicious of programs that try to solve adult problems by mandating changes in the schools. Just as the problem of segregation was supposed to be solved by mandating integrated schools, rather than tackling bigger societal problems, the problems of low voter turnout, corrupt politicians in Illinois being elected by machine politics and not by the will of the people, and a populace far likelier to care about making money than about their homeless neighbors is apparently supposed to be solved by civics courses. Other solutions would work better—but that is not the question your task force was formed to answer.</p> <p>Thank you for your very thorough work; I enjoyed reading your report (since I have never once in my life missed the</p>	<p>Cheryl Chapman Former early childhood teacher Brookfield</p>



Public Input Received From the Period of October 1–10, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
	opportunity to vote!) but I do not think that an unfunded mandate, or even a funded one for that matter, would justify the extra burdens you will be putting on a school system that is doing its job already as well as it can.	
3	<p>While I believe civics education is important, I do not believe the current proposal is workable. As I understand the plan, civics would become a required class. The teacher of that class would be required to take specific training to earn a <i>civics certificate</i> in order to teach the class. This is one more unfunded mandate for schools at a time when districts are already cutting staff and programs because of reductions in state funding.</p> <p>This class as proposed will create additional, unnecessary costs to districts. I have been a teacher, high school principal and superintendent with over 40 years in education. I can tell you without doubt, a certificate will not significantly improve the outcome desired, but it will create serious problems with budgets and scheduling. There are very capable and dedicated teachers in <u>all</u> school districts that can teach your civics curriculum without further training. If the current teacher is <u>not</u> competent, a certificate will not help! Believe me.</p> <p>This mandate will be particularly onerous in smaller districts that have only one or two government/history teachers, teaching several related classes, not just Civics. Scheduling for all targeted students for the one or two civics classes will be impossible. Requiring a certificate for civics will provide very little, if any gain in student civic scores, and is costly, cumbersome, and unnecessary.</p>	<p>David Zumdahl Former teacher, principal, superintendent Byron</p>
4	<p>Thank you for allowing for public input. There are definitely some good pieces to the recommendations. However, I would strongly encourage you to think of these from the perspective of the school. You're proposing more unfunded mandates and taking away some of the local control over the curriculum. I doubt few would argue the idea of a civic education. We want our students to be responsible citizens. But, requiring two service projects (junior high and high school) seems to take away some of the teacher's control. In addition, it creates a new burden on districts to track and fund this. Remember the state is not funding its current obligations; I'm not impressed with the proposal to add new unfunded mandates.</p> <p>The other issue, beyond curriculum requirements, is the issue of certification. It is becoming increasingly harder for out-of-state candidates to get licensed in the state. (Not to mention the amount of time it is taking the state to process substitute licenses). Please be mindful of the need for quality teachers, regardless of the state university/college they graduated from.</p> <p>I would caution the state from adding additional standards (and courses) to the framework they adopt. While there will always be potentially great things omitted from the curriculum, there are only so many standards a teacher can cover in a year/course. I would like the task force to reconsider adding the new course to the graduation requirements. And, please remove the unfunded mandates of service projects and involvement in the election process. The requirements directed upon schools from legislators are getting out of control.</p>	<p>Nicole P. Rummel Director of Instruction El Paso-Gridley CUSD #11</p>



Public Input Received From the Period of October 11–17, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
5	<p>The desire of the committee to stress the importance of Civics education in our schools is a worthwhile endeavor. However, this desire to increase the importance of Civics education should not come in the form of additional mandates placed on school districts. Specifically, the requirement for a stand-alone Civics course would be harmful to students, as this would limit their ability to enroll in elective Career and Technical Education courses, which provide students with the academic and technical skills necessary for success in the workplace and in their post-secondary pursuits.</p> <p>I, like many others, agree that our students should be exposed to more Civics education. But, the answer is not to mandate additional courses. Students would be better served if Civics education was embedded into existing core curriculum. Students are already required to complete two years of Social Studies, a portion of that could be devoted to Civics education. I would personally like to see other ineffective curricular mandates rescinded. This would allow students to enroll in a wider variety of elective courses, many of which are the reason why students continue to persist and complete high school.</p>	<p>Nick Elder System Director Education for Employment Champaign/ Douglas/Ford/ Piatt Counties Champaign</p>
6	<p>I am writing to offer commentary regarding proposed changes to the ILS in social studies and in particular, to the issue of civic education. My comments are informed by (1) reading of the reports and minutes of meetings of the IL Task Force on Civic Education; (2) my education in social studies—BA in political science; (3) 15 years’ experience as a classroom teacher of social studies in public and parochial school in the U.S. and in international schools in Germany and Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>Comments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social studies in general and civics in particular have been marginalized in discourse by leaders at all levels and sectors (e.g., education, government, business, etc.) by focusing solely on “college and career readiness” neglecting citizenship or civic engagement.</li> <li>2. I strongly encourage that formulation of recommendations for civic education and revision of ILS in social studies be guided by the C-3 Framework.</li> <li>3. Heed caution with regard to corporate involvement or aims in civic education. Civic education should not serve a corporate agenda.</li> <li>4. If civic education is important, then the General Assembly needs to appropriate funds to support it. Money demonstrates commitment.</li> <li>5. If schools are expected to facilitate student participation in service learning projects, funds will need to be appropriated and dispersed to schools in order to cover the costs associated with the implementation of such a requirement. Meaningful service learning projects will require that a staff member is paid to spend time to research opportunities, match students to opportunities, to monitor and assess the program, to keep track of student participation and successful completion, etc.</li> </ol>	<p>Kim Freitag Assistant Principal Cloverdale School Carol Stream</p>

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	Comments	Name and Role
7	<p>The report coming forth from the Illinois Task Force on Civic education poses an intriguing but most likely fruitless effort at meaningless legislation. The highlights of this plan contain useful ideas for change regarding the requirement of a dedicated Civics course and seek better qualified Civics instructors, which certainly has a value. The second key component would be a mandated Civil service project required before graduation. While one can clearly see the value of such a program to a student's education, the reality is that school districts will struggle to complete such a mandate in any meaningful way.</p> <p>Much like the state mandated but not state scored exam on the Constitution many schools will fulfill this service mandate in the most convenient way possible. The fact that it will need to be completed outside of school will also make it difficult for schools to come up with meaningful programs, and some aspects of running a meaningful service program could be cost prohibitive.</p> <p>If the state cares to show that it values Civil education they need to show they are also willing and capable to assist schools, especially those of low income by helping fund the establishment of this Civic service programs.</p>	Benjamin Baer Social Studies Teacher Coal City
8	<p>I applaud the desire of the committee to elevate the importance of Civics education in our schools. However it should not come in the form of a mandated additional course unless previous mandates for additional "core" area courses are repealed. The additional core course mandates have shown no positive correlation with increased standardized test scores (ACT data). The well intentioned mandates are in fact harmful to students as they limit their ability to take elective Career and Technical Education courses which reinforce (and have been shown to increase test scores) the importance and relevance of math, technical reading, and critical thinking. Ironically, the highly prescriptive nature of our educational system is especially harmful to those it is trying to "help." The majority of us would agree our population is in desperate need of a better understanding of the workings of our nation's government. They would also agree we are in desperate need of a better understanding of financial management and budgeting. Is that the next mandate?</p> <p>Please consider requiring embedding this into existing curriculum or removing other ineffective mandates to leave room for students to take elective coursework.</p>	Deanna Benson Career and Technical Education/ Business Teacher
9	<p>It was reported in our local newspaper that a meeting is to be held regarding civic course curriculum and the new Social Studies Standards for Illinois, as outlined in a report submitted to the Governor &amp; the General Assembly by the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education. I have not seen this report, but have been in contact with my local ROE regarding the creation of the new Social Studies Standards.</p> <p>It is my understanding that the new standards are being based solely on the C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards. If that is the case, then a great disservice is being done to the Social Studies teachers of this state. We have long been required by the Illinois Learning Standards to cover such a wide breadth of knowledge. As a teacher, it has been very frustrating to try to figure out which standards are more important than others, because addressing all of</p>	Amy Vogt Trico Community Unit School District #176

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	<p>them is impossible! I have worked with the C3 Framework, and I feel that it is just as general. Please create a set of standards that is realistic &amp; achievable! Standards that outline a manageable, specific scope and sequence by grade level would take away the guesswork and frustration of the classroom teacher.</p> <p>The Next Generation Science Standards did a wonderful job of creating usable documents where information is organized into units with specific learning objectives. These units also show connections to other units within the curriculum, as well as connections to the Literacy Standards from Common Core. That's the type of new learning standards the Social Studies teachers deserve. Thank you.</p>	
10	<p>As a social studies teacher turned Career and Technical educator, I am writing to ask for some information in regards to the proposal to add a Civics requirement to the graduation requirements. As all of the schools in my area already require a government class for graduation in which students are required to take and pass the Constitution, I am wondering why this mandate is even needed. Is this formalization of what most districts are already doing or in addition to the government classes students are already taking? Is this an anomaly with CPS or are downstate districts not teaching governments?</p> <p>It seems in an era where the State of Illinois has been unable to fully finance schools that an additional mandate would only increase the financial hardship on schools, not to mention the repercussions that an additional graduation requirement will have on students and elective programs. I ask the State Board of Education to fully explore the impact and provide information on how many schools and students across the state this will impact. It seems to me that the goals of this mandate are already being achieved in Will County so I am not sure where the problem lies or why a state mandates is the answer. If the state really wanted to see students prepared for the future, maybe the mandate should be an eight period day for high school students, but I know the financial and local control problems this would trigger.</p>	<p>Elizabeth M Kaufman Social studies teacher WILCO Area Career Center</p>
11	<p>I applaud the desire of the committee to elevate the importance of Civics education in our schools. However, it should not come in the form of a mandated additional course unless previous mandates for additional “core” area courses are repealed. The additional core course mandates have shown no positive correlation with increased standardized test scores (ACT data). The well intentioned mandates are in fact harmful to students as they limit their ability to take elective Career and Technical Education courses which reinforce (and have been shown to increase test scores) the importance and relevance of math, technical reading, and critical thinking. Ironically, the highly prescriptive nature of our educational system is especially harmful to those it is trying to “help.” The majority of us would agree our population is in desperate need of a better understanding of the workings of our nation's government. They would also agree we are in desperate need of a better understanding of financial management and budgeting. Is that the next mandate?</p> <p>Please consider requiring embedding this into existing curriculum or removing other ineffective mandates to leave room for students to take elective coursework. Thank you for your time and attention in this matter.</p>	<p>Tammi J. Conn Director of Career &amp; Technical Education Valley View School District 365 Romeoville</p>

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12	<p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and technical education class opportunities. While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own.</p> <p>If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student takes at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career. Our education system is focusing too much on “book smarts” and not enough on real world smarts. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use in their future career.</p> <p>Please do NOT mandate another course. Imbed the “civics” into already existing courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school.</p>	<p>Marcy Satterwhite Business Instructor Lake Land College Mattoon</p>
13	<p>A Civics Course should not be a required course.</p> <p>The content of this course should be infused and covered in many high school level classes. High School students should be allowed to investigate careers and vocations that they may choose for careers. Adding another requirement limits even more the freedom and ability to be able to do this.</p>	<p>Judith Wolters Business teacher Chester High School</p>
14	<p>As a business education instructor, please reconsider the possibility of a civics class being required in high school. My class sizes are already shrinking, as are other CTE classes. Between the addition of other required classes over the years, and now the possibility of this, I fear several CTE teachers could lose their job, or be reduced to part-time.</p>	<p>Patty Wilkinson Business Education Instructor Stark County High School Toulon</p>
15	<p>All students are already required to take a government class, therefore, they do not need a civics class. Well rounded students need the opportunity to take classes in business education and other vocational areas. Thank goodness not all students go to college. We need people in the area of the trades and business. Vote against required civics classes. Support all students.</p>	<p>Mary Sternberg Business Education Teacher Red Bud High School Red Bud</p>

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16	<p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and technical education class opportunities.</p> <p>While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own. If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student takes at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career. Our education system is focusing too much on “book smarts” and not enough on real world smarts. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use in their future career.</p> <p>Please do NOT mandate another course. Imbed the “civics” into already existing courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school.</p>	<p>Julie Morrissey Business Instructor Cerro Gordo High School; Atwood Hammond High School</p>
17	<p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and technical education class opportunities. While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own.</p> <p><b>If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student takes at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career. Our education system is focusing too much on “book smarts” and not enough on real world smarts. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use in their future career.</b></p> <p>Please do NOT mandate another course. Imbed the “civics” into already existing courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school.</p>	<p>Jo Ellen Walsh Business teacher Williamsville High School</p>
18	<p>As you know, Career and Technical Education (CTE) continues to suffer and programs are lost as new requirements for graduation are added to a student’s schedule. For the most part, all Freshmen and most Sophomores have no time with their current course requirements/required class schedule, to add any electives or CTE Courses. At a time when students need to explore various career opportunities and develop Career Readiness Skills, they are trapped in academic and required courses for graduation. If they have not failed in any of the “Required Courses” during the Freshman and Sophomore years, they may incorporate elective and CTE courses, at the Junior and Senior level. Some of those that fail required courses at the Freshmen and Sophomore level, become trapped in a full schedule of academic requirements and may drop out of school all together.</p> <p>Counselors always load as many required courses into the Freshman and Sophomore schedule as possible. Counselors are struggling to get students through all of the requirements as things are. Also, keep in mind that, any</p>	<p>Bruce A. Milner Curriculum Revitalization Project—T&amp;EE SIU Workforce Development</p>

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	<p>time more graduation requirements are added for a student, elective courses, Career Readiness Skills and Career Exploration, are lost. Many of the CTE and skill level courses that students enjoy, and those that “Keep Students in School” are not even available to Freshmen and Sophomores.</p> <p>We must make sure that Students have “Career Ready Skills” and the opportunity to explore a variety of “Career Opportunities” before they graduate. They will not have this if we continue to chop away a student’s opportunity to explore careers and take elective offerings at the secondary level.</p>	
19	<p>Please reconsider the possibility of mandating yet another course requirement for our Illinois public schools. Adding the possible civics requirement course will cut down, even more so, on the possibility of students getting an opportunity to take REAL-WORLD JOB SKILLS-BUILDING elective courses such as career and technical education class opportunities. Civics can, and should be incorporated into already existing coursework within social studies requirements. Rather than mandate yet another “book-memorizing” course, implement at least one requirement in the Career &amp; Technical Education field. Provide an opportunity for students to experience courses that teach REAL WORLD skills and REALISTIC JOB OPPORTUNITIES. Courses such as Computer Applications, Keyboarding, Business Concepts are ones that will open students to career opportunities in the real-world.</p> <p>Help us to teach our students how to get jobs, how to keep jobs, where to find jobs. Help us teach students computer skills for jobs in the 21st century. Help us teach students how to be contributing members of our communities, state, and society. Please do NOT mandate another course. Civics should be included in an already required social studies course. Mandate one CAREER &amp; TECHNICAL EDUCATION elective INSTEAD. Let’s produce students who can go out and improve our state, not simple [<i>sic</i>] memorize information!</p>	<p>Abbi Barton Business &amp; Computers Teacher North Mac High School Virden</p>
20	<p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and technical education class opportunities.</p> <p>While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own. The Consumer Education Mandate that was instituted years ago already covers many if not all the topics that a civics course would. If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student takes at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career. Consumer Education, taught by those who are most qualified to do so, currently provides students with the real world information they need to succeed during and after high school. Our education system is focusing too much on “book smarts” and not enough on real world smarts. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use in their future career.</p>	<p>Gary B. Hutchinson President ACTE Business Education Division</p>

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	Please do NOT mandate another course. Imbed the “civics” into already existing CTE courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school.	
21	<p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and technical education class opportunities. While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own.</p> <p>If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student takes at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career. Our education system is focusing too much on college prep and not enough on real-world/career experiences to help students determine what post-secondary education best suits them. Career and technical education courses provide students with real-world experience they can use in their future careers and lives. Please do NOT mandate another course. Imbed the “civics” into already existing courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school and help them become productive citizens.</p>	Julie Chadd
22	<p>I am an instructional leader for both literacy and social studies for the Springfield Public Schools. I attended the public hearing yesterday and was impressed with the work that has been done by the task force. I would like to comment on <u>Recommendation #2</u>: Revision of Illinois’s Social Studies Standards. Our district has been working on implementing the Common Core State Standards for the past several years, and more recently, on the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards. The work of revising the Illinois learning standards for social studies has lagged behind.</p> <p>Before legislative action is taken on increasing course requirements (Recommendation #1) and requiring project or service based learning (Recommendation #3), the standards need to be revised as soon as possible. That, to me, should be the first course of action. With new standards, we can revise curriculum and assessment to match the standards. If the standards reflect the work of the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework (C3), and if these standards are implemented, schools will be addressing much of what the task force has called out as essential for the students of Illinois. Thank you.</p>	<p>Margie Buyze Secondary Literacy Teacher, Instructional Leader Literacy Support Services Springfield School District 186</p>



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23	<p>As a proponent of Career and Technical Education for over four decades, I would ask that you not make any decision which would jeopardize the opportunities high school students have to select elective courses in their daily school schedule. We have seen this occur so much in the past with the additional requirements mandated in the areas of mathematics, science, English, and writing.</p> <p>Career and Technical Education courses (agriculture, business, family and consumer science, health occupations, and technology and engineering education) are so vital to the future of so many of our high school students. Please do not put another barrier in place which might totally destroy an elective program in your area schools and deny opportunities to students which they deserve.</p>	<p>Ron Hains Director Two Rivers Career Education System Beardstown</p>
24	<p>Adding civics as a required course for high school graduation is only going to hurt our Career and Technical Education department. With all of the core subjects that students are required to take, there leaves little room for electives. The Vocational Education departments across the state are fighting to remain open in their schools. Adding another state requirement will just compound our dilemma—getting our students to take vocational classes.</p> <p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and technical education class opportunities. While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own. If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student takes at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career. Our education system is focusing too much on “book smarts” and not enough on real world smarts. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use in their future career.</p> <p>Please do NOT mandate another course. Imbed the “civics” into already existing courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school.</p>	<p>Barbara Anna Rendak Business Instructor, Retired Kelly High School Chicago</p>

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25	<p>I am writing to underscore the vital importance of civic education in schools. While I work in civic education as Director of Curriculum and Teacher Development at Mikva Challenge, I actually address you today as the mom of two public school students in Chicago. When I think of the many things I hope and expect my children to gain from attending public school, foremost on the list is the skill of working collaboratively with others of diverse backgrounds; the development of civic ethic and social responsibility, the empowerment of developing communication and problem solving skills and the efficacy to know that every individual can make a difference in our democracy. As a former history teacher, I know that without the explicit teaching of civics in school, we put our democracy at risk.</p> <p>I encourage ISBE to adopt a broad understanding of what teaching civics means. I hope we are not thinking it means textbook memorization of three branches of government, of the Bill of Rights and then passing the mandatory Constitution test. A broad view of civics means that it is not relegated to the four walls of the social studies classroom. A broad view of civics includes community based service learning projects where students are learning 21st Century and life-long skills by seeing a project through from beginning to end and by working collaboratively with their peers and community members. The efforts of students engaged in this way not only benefit their own development and growth, but benefit our communities as well. Learning needs to be taken out of the classroom and embedded in authentic practice.</p> <p>We need civics in schools because without it we fail to understand that everyone does not and need not share our opinions. Our society is suffering from a lack of civic discourse in just about every aspect of our lives from politics to business. We can change this. Illinois is already leading in the nation in civic education in many ways thanks to the work of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition and the work of its members. But access to high quality curriculum, PD, resources and support are spotty at best. The majority of schools awarded the ICMC Democracy School status is in well-resourced suburbs. We need to bring this to our rural and urban schools as well (because if it is good enough for some, it is good enough for all).</p> <p>There are so many initiatives vying for attention in schools. Civics is not a passing fad. It is a not a silver bullet to solve all of our society's ills. It is a necessary cornerstone and a moral imperative. Because whether our students go to college or straight to the workforce, they are all citizens and need to learn in an intentional way the rights and responsibilities inherent in that title.</p>	<p>Jill Bass Director of Curriculum and Teacher Development Mikva Challenge Chicago</p>
26	<p>Illinois should have a civics class, plus service learning projects, in all schools. Kids need to partake in community and learn how to build a better world. They need Civics and Service in their <i>Public</i> Education.</p> <p>Thanks for your consideration.</p>	<p>Marc Furigay Director of Education Street-Level Youth Media</p>

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27	<p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and technical education class opportunities. While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own.</p> <p>Why not mandate that every student take at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career? That is what the Common Core Standards are referencing. Our education system is focusing too much on “book wise” and not enough on real world applications. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use in their future career. Imbed the “civics” into already existing courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school.</p>	<p>Cathleen Bardy, CTE Instructor Huntley High School Huntley</p>
28	<p>I think that Illinois school districts should require a Civics course as a graduation requirement. Civics teaches students the foundations of the American government. Students are required to take a history class to be able to graduate, so it only makes sense for a civics class to be required for graduation. A knowledge of Civics is helpful and can be used for applications in the real world. Civics is a class that teaches students about the important aspects of the government.</p>	<p>Student, U-46</p>
29	<p>I think that Civics should be a required course because it is the foundation of our country. Also Civics helps students understand what to look for in a government and understand how to vote. Civics is not a difficult course is only 1 credit. If Math is and needs to be a requirement so should the thing that runs our country.</p>	<p>Student, U-46</p>
30	<p>I strongly encourage you to make civic education and service in the community a requirement for graduation for students. Civics is about helping to make this world a better place. It is about engagement in the governments we have and knowing how to function effectively in them. Civic awareness is making sure that a government of the people, by the people and for the people is an American reality. However, civic awareness and service are not genetic traits people are born with. They are learned behaviors that need to be fostered, practiced and reflected on. Students whose families are not civically aware or engaged, are at a distinct disadvantage compared to students that are civically involved. This creates a civic-engagement gap that I see daily in my experience as an educator. Schools need to provide all students the skills necessary to be successful in the future. And while we may train them to read, write, and do math when they leave our doors at graduation, have we adequately trained them for the most important job they will have in their life, that of being an informed and active American citizen?</p> <p>A required civics course with clear standards toward engaging students in the processes of a democracy provides students the life skills to formulate their beliefs, voice, and actions and will benefits <i>[sic]</i> the student, their community, and all of America. Service to community is one of the foundations of civic learning. It is not difficult</p>	<p>Don Pankuch Department Chair Social Studies Metea Valley High School Aurora</p>

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	<p>to see service when Americans are hit by tragedies such as Pearl Harbor, September the 11th, or natural disasters. Americans join together to work for the common needs of a community. But we should do this every day, not just days of tragedy. And not just at the national level, but also state, local, and community levels.</p> <p>Service to others is also a habit of mind that needs to be fostered. When schools structure learning around service, they are able to link action and reflection. This provides opportunities for students to grow and consider the impact of their actions on themselves, on others, and on their communities. They begin to see a world that is less about “I” and more about “We.”</p> <p>This is the America that emerged from our past; this is the America we must guarantee in our future; this is the America our schools must help foster for the future citizens of America. Thank you for your time.</p>	
31	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A mandatory civics education course taken in High School (most likely grade 11 or 12 which is when many students will be voting) is a must.</li> <li>2. A mandatory and state officiated civics test or equivalent must be part of high school graduation and 8th grade promotion.</li> <li>3. Eliminate the state mandates and incorporate those (specifically) into learning standards. This would help eliminate confusion.</li> <li>4. Do not get rid of ALL Illinois State Learning Goals, Benchmarks, Standards, and Performance Descriptors. Only rework the Learning Goal 14—Political Systems and the <i>[sic]</i> examine the remaining standards. The remainder of the learning goals, benchmarks and standards already align well with the Common Core.</li> <li>5. Instead of reworking/changing all Social Science learning standards, eliminate redundancies and simplify. Standards were well made 15 years ago and align well with Common Core literacy standards for history and the sciences. Completely changing this would create unnecessary work. The standards already have a heavy emphasis on utilizing primary sources to teach history and other social sciences. Don’t recreate the wheel.</li> <li>6. In rural districts it may be more difficult for students to complete a community based project as part of a grade. Thanks for your time.</li> </ol>	<p>Ryan D. Koehler 7th grade social studies teacher Fieldcrest Middle School</p>
32	<p>My name is Adam Dyche and I am a Social Studies teacher and Department Chair at Waubonsie Valley H.S. in Aurora, IL. I am contacting you regarding the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition’s Task Force on Civic Education’s recent recommendations for civic learning in the State of Illinois. WVHS is current <i>[sic]</i> Democracy School, which means our school is globally supportive of the principles for civic education. In essence, civic learning is bigger than just Social Studies. While civic foundations are based in Social Studies curriculum, it <i>[sic]</i> does not reside solely in</p>	<p>Adam R. Dyche Social Studies Department Chair Waubonsie Valley High School</p>

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	<p>these courses. The principles are taught in all of our school’s offerings. However, without an established civic education program, <i>backed and supported by the State of Illinois</i>, the success of civic learning will deteriorate and the pool of engaged and informed young adults will shrink. We cannot let this happen to our democratic society.</p> <p>I imagine there are opponents to these recommendations, many of whom are concerned that requiring civics and service learning for graduation will negatively impact their curriculum and offerings. While I do not doubt that they have concerns, one simple truth matters more than all: <b><i>not every student who attends high school goes on to be a writer, entrepreneur, scientist, athlete, teacher, doctor, computer programmer, etc., but all students go on to be citizens.</i></b> Civic education is at the core of every individual in our society, and must have the full faith and credit of the State of Illinois.</p>	Aurora
33	<p>As a teacher at Neuqua Valley High School in Naperville, Illinois, I strongly support the recommendations of the Task Force on Civic Education:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Require a standalone civic education course in high school;</li> <li>2. Revise the Illinois Social Studies Standards;</li> <li>3. Require a service learning project in middle and high school;</li> <li>4. Align licensure and certification requirements for pre-service teachers with best practices;</li> <li>5. Provide access to professional development aligned to best practices in civic education; and</li> <li>6. Involve students in the election process.</li> </ol>	<p>Thomas R. Hyngstrom, PhD Social Studies Instructor Indian Prairie School District 204 Naperville</p>
34	<p>My name is Emily Tourdot and I am a Mathematics teacher at Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein. As a Democracy School, we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>All of us, regardless of our professions, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home, so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.</p>	<p>Emily Tourdot Mathematics instructor Carmel Catholic High School Mundelein</p>

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	Comments	Name and Role
35	<p>My name is Jeff Ptacek and I am a Religious Studies Teacher at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.</p>	<p>Jeffrey Ptacek Faculty, Religious Studies Department Youth &amp; Government Advisor Carmel Catholic High School</p>
36	<p>I believe that students should be required to take a civics course so they can graduate. As you grow up politics and how the government is run will play a bigger factor in your life. You need to know how the government works and how to vote and things like that. Civics teaches you all of that.</p>	<p>Student, U-46</p>
37	<p>My name is Brian Smithe and I am a teacher at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.</p>	<p>Brian Smithe Teacher Carmel Catholic High School</p>
38	<p>My name is Kirsten Telwak and I am a teacher at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force. Un saludo.</p>	<p>Sra. Kirsten Telwak Spanish Teacher Carmel Catholic High School</p>

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	Comments	Name and Role
39	I believe that Civics should be a required course in Illinois. In the short few months in this Civics class, I have already learned many things that are useful in the real world. An example would be learning the differences in the political beliefs. We were able to follow the Rauner/Quinn Governor election, and even had our own debate during class. Also, we learned about Active Citizenship. Even if everyone cannot be a good citizen, they should at least be forced to know what a good citizen is, and it could end up changing our lives for the better.	Student, U-46
40	In this fast paced world we live in, it is very easy to fall behind in politics and become ignorant to the differing viewpoints that govern our state. Preparing students to be successful in the real world should be the goal of every school in Illinois. To do this, there needs to be some exposure to a civics or government class. Only with this vital understanding of how the nation and the state works will the citizens of tomorrow be able to live successful lives and stay involved with the government. The course offers relevant information to life and can help people make decisions about what they think is right rather than following what others say.	Student, U-46
41	Yes, I believe that Illinois should require a Civics class to graduate. It is good to know how the government is ran [ <i>sic</i> ] and what part that you can make a difference in. Even if the students do not remember everything they had learned once they enter the real world, they will have a general background knowledge of the government and the things they do.	Student, U-46
42	Civics should be a required course to graduate. It gives students the basics of our government.	Student, U-46
43	I feel as though civics should be required in the state of Illinois because of the real world value that taking the course has. It is important to be knowledgeable of how government works in the United States and in the world if we wish to preserve democracy. People should not be ignorant of their government because when we are older and paying taxes to the government and voting in elections, we should know where our money is going to and that our government is not taking advantage of us. Before taking civics, I would not have even known anything about Bruce Rauner or Pat Quinn. Core subjects such as science, math and English are important, but civics has such a significant and obvious real life application to seniors that are about to enter the real world. It is extremely important to know what is going on in the government and being an active citizen because that is what makes a good democracy and a good society.	Student, U-46
44	In this fast paced world we live in, it is very easy to fall behind in politics and become ignorant to the differing viewpoints that govern our state. Preparing students to be successful in the real world should be the goal of every school in Illinois. To do this, there needs to be some exposure to a civics or government class. Only with this vital understanding of how the nation and the state works will the citizens of tomorrow be able to live successful lives and stay involved with the government. The course offers relevant information to life and can help people make decisions about what they think is right rather than following what others say.	Student, U-46



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	Comments	Name and Role
45	I feel like Civics should be required because it forces kids to learn about the government system that they are living in.	Student, U-46
46	I think Civics should be required because its [ <i>sic</i> ] a class the focuses on real world issues rather than triangles or learning to write cursive. Overall I feel like Civics is a very beneficial class and should be required.	Student, U-46
47	I think that civics should be a required course to take to graduate. With us being seniors we can start voting soon and we should know what is going on and how it works. I like taking civics so I don't mind coming to class.	Student, U-46
48	Hi, my name is John Chisholm and I am a Social Studies teacher at Community High School in West Chicago, IL. I have had the pleasure of teaching our government program for the last 4 years with Mary Ellen Daneels. In our program we simulate the US House of Representatives and I have been amazed at how well our students do in the simulations and how much they learn in our civic education class. Please consider to make a stand-alone civic education class a requirement for graduation. This class is pivotal to assist students with self-advocacy and an understanding of how our government actually operates so that they, too, will be ready to participate in civics once out of high school.	John Chisholm Teacher, government Community High School West Chicago
49	I think that Illinois should require all districts to take a Civics class, because it help students, especially seniors to get a better understanding on what they believe in. So that way when it comes to voting time they'll know what to do and who to vote for. And this is very important not only for us but for the future of our kids because we are the ones making the decision of how we should live in our state.	Student, U-46
50	<p>My name is Melissa Schwartz and I am a teacher at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.</p> <p>I hardly think that the fact that we are one of 10 states that doesn't require a civics or government course and also one of the 10 most corrupt states as determined by a joint study by Indiana University and the University of Hong Kong is a coincidence, and the fact that there are those who are working to maintain the status quo begins to feel like a conspiracy. I certainly hope you will consider this at the hearing on November 6th.</p>	Melissa Schwartz Teacher Carmel Catholic High School Mundelein

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	Comments	Name and Role
51	<p>My name is James Schuster. I am a history teacher and the Social Studies department chair at Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. But it is important that ALL schools in Illinois support a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>The current push is for STEM studies, but in reality, not all students will become scientists or technical workers. All of us, however, regardless of our professions, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens—and the ignorance of and/or tolerance for ineffective governance has caused Illinois and our nation to pay a heavy price in recent years. We need to take the lead from the Democracy Schools and help our students become better citizens. All of us will reap the benefits—or pay the price of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.</p>	James Schuster History teacher; department chair Carmel Catholic High School Mundelein
52	Illinois should require a civics [ <i>sic</i> ] as a graduation requirement. Having a basic understanding of our government and how it works could help people later in life. It's pretty sad to see that many US citizens can't list their five basic freedoms from the first amendment.	Student, U-46
53	I am a senior at Bartlett high school leaving my opinion on whether schools should require a civics course to graduate. I think that schools in Illinois should require a civics course as a graduation requirement. I believe this, because Chicago is one of the most corrupt cities in the United States. It is also important to teach students Civics, because it teaches about the government and democracies. If students are not taught about the government then they will never understand what is truly happening in the government.	Student, U-46
54	<p>I am a retired Government teacher from Maine Township High School District 207. For six years, I served as Department Chair at Maine East High School in Park Ridge, Il. My career spanned 37 years, from 1970 to 2007. During that time I taught Government, U. S. History, Economics, and History of the Western World to students of all ability levels and reading levels. (Examples include U. S. History Accelerated ((Honors)), regular, transitional/remedial, and ESL. I also taught AP Government, regular Government, transitional, and ESL Government.) The ESL students had over 50 different birth nations and spoke over 70 languages at home.</p> <p>I heartily endorse the recommendations to increase civic education. I will speak to the benefits of civic education, but I want to also address the issues that vocational and Fine Arts teachers raised in opposition to the creation of a three year requirement at Maine early in the 21st century. We recognize the value of educating students to be responsible, contributing members of society. That includes having them capable of finding employment. It also includes the ability to re-train when jobs are obsolete. It means having them be able to read and write. The Fine</p>	Barbara Heerman Retired government teacher Maine Township High School East Park Ridge

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	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Name and Role</b>
	<p>Arts and Applied Arts and Technology teachers and chars [sic] openly said that they do not teach reading across the curriculum. We had a program that taught students how to fix computers. Those students know how to fix computers that have become obsolete. Can they retrain? In 1970 when I began my career, being a TV repairman was a great career. How did they retrain as transitioned from tubes to digital TV?</p> <p>Social Science education—History and the behavioral social sciences—helps to increase literacy rates for underserved populations. Maine instituted a 3 year requirement when I was Department Chair. We had immediate reading test improvements for our Hispanic, African American (Black), and special education populations. The most dramatic increase was for our Hispanic students. Teaching reading across the curriculum skills, non-fiction expository writing, vocabulary acquisition skills, map reading, interpreting graphs, charts, and other critical thinking skills is inherent in social science education.</p> <p>We taught students what it means to have human rights in a society. We taught them what it means for a government to regulate rather than to own the oil companies (e.g., students from Mexico). We taught them important civic skills. Every year the League of Women voters brought in simulators to allow students to use the punch card system—there were no hanging chads for our former students. Our students were working in political campaigns in 1970 when I began my career and they still are today.</p> <p>The office of the Cook County Clerk sent individuals to our school to register voters. We had students registering other students. In the fall of the senior year when few students were 18, the teachers were able to register students to vote. Now the impact of student efforts from Stevenson high school is that 17 year olds who will be eligible to vote in a Presidential election, can vote in the preceding primary. Local political officials (mayors, aldermen, township officials, state representatives, state senators, and U.S. Representatives, come out to speak. We even had county and gubernatorial candidates make appearances.</p> <p>My own children benefitted from the social science education. Although one was a Biology major in college, he talks about how important the reading and writing skills he learned in high school are for his career. Had he had the option, he might have taken a lot more science and math classes in high school rather than a Government class that taught him to read primary sources, to seek people’s biases in reading, and gave him an understanding of politics. Moreover he is an active citizen, seeking out information about local issues. He and his wife have been active the discussion of proposed policy changes in his town.</p> <p>I live in the community in which I taught. In 2000 people would walk up to me and say, “You may not remember me, but you were my government teacher. I understand what’s happening. I understand the electoral college because of you.” As frustrating as those events were to all of us, the people all told me, “I always vote.”</p> <p>When my husband ran for alderman in 1981, his opponent was one of my former students. When my husband ran for re-election in 1985, that former student was one of his campaign managers. We change lives; we change the</p>	

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	students' understanding of the political process. We teach them that voting can make a difference, and that their future depends upon their participation in our republic.	
55	I think high schools should require civics because it teaches students about how elections really work and what goes on during elections. It teaches the way of a politician and helps show students what to look for in governments. Without civics, students wont <i>[sic]</i> fully learn about what goes on in the government system.	Student, U-46
56	My name is Jacqueline Wojtyszyn and I am a Social Studies teacher at Oswego High School (CUSD308). It is imperative that we have a mandate from the State of Illinois to require Civic Education for ALL high school graduates. Information regarding our countries <i>[sic]</i> Constitution and our rights is extremely important. We need educated and informed citizens so our country can remain great and democratic, Thank you for your time.	Jacqueline Wojtyszyn Social Studies Teacher Oswego High School
57	<p>As a parent, informed citizen, and concerned teacher, I am writing to you in support of a Civics Graduation Requirement. We require many courses in high school in order to graduate, courses that may or may not affect/impact our students <i>[sic]</i> lives. However, ALL students will be (are) citizens and as such need to know their rights and responsibilities as a citizen. This need was the original need cited for public education in the United States. Without an understanding of our rights and responsibilities in a democracy, our very democracy is in peril. Therefore, I recommend the State of Illinois:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. require a standalone civic education course in high school;</li> <li>2. revise the Illinois Social Studies Standards;</li> <li>3. require a service learning project in middle and high school;</li> <li>4. align licensure and certification requirements for pre-service teachers with best practices;</li> <li>5. provide access to professional development aligned to best practices in civic education; and</li> <li>6. Involve students in the election process.</li> </ol> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration.</p>	Rita Guritz Chair of Social Studies Department Glenbard South High School
58	I believe that students should be required to take a civics course so they can graduate. As you grow up politics and how the government is run will play a bigger factor in your life. You need to know how the government works and how to vote and things like that. Civics teaches you all of that.	Student, senior at Bartlett High School
59	I am a high school senior in the U-46 district and I do think Illinois should require a Civics course as a graduation requirement. I say this because it is very important to learn how our democracy works. Every student should have	Student, senior in U-46 district

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	the knowledge on how bills are passed in Congress and how our voting system works, and without advancing their schema by taking Civics, students will be lost in this world.	
60	I think that all school districts should require a Civics course for seniors to take. It is very beneficial to students that will help later on in life. Civics teaches the students about the government, which will be far more helpful than some other useless classes.	Student, U-46
61	Yes I think that a Civics course SHOULD be required by all students in order to graduate. The reason for this is because I have learned so much in my civics class about not only the local Illinois government, but the U.S. government as a whole. Young students need to know about these things so they can have the knowledge to vote themselves, and make the right decisions in the real world.	Student, U-46
62	I am a senior at Bartlett high school. I believe that it should be required to take a civics class as it teaches students the importance of our government. With this information more students can be able to be more involved in our government.	Student, U-46, senior
63	Hello, I believe that taking a civics course should be required for every senior in high school because it give <i>[sic]</i> students a chance to really get to know what happens within the government and how it works to help the country. Even though this course might not interest many people, it gives them a chance to broaden their knowledge over different topics and get to know the world of politics a little bit better.	Student, U-46
64	I strongly believe that civics should be a required course for everyone. It is extremely important for students who are future voters to know how their government works. Otherwise, the government will take advantage of this and walk all over the people. People have the right to be educated on how their country functions.	Student, U-46
65	I think Civics should be required to take and pass in not just Illinois but in every state. It's important for everyone student to learn about there <i>[sic]</i> government. They should learn the importance in voting. Seniors will be the future of the country and need to learn about the government.	Student, U-46, senior, Bartlett high school
66	I think that Civics is one of the more important classes there is because it helps you later on in life. It also helps you further understand the government that we have implemented today.	Student, U-46
67	I am IN FAVOR of a state mandate to require Civic Education for all high school graduates.	Kate Ruttenberg Social Studies Teacher Oswego High School

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68	<p>As a high school English teacher, I am responsible for encouraging our students to develop a lifelong love of reading. I teach my students how to communicate effectively: to speak and write well, to understand elements of argument and persuasion, to learn how to discuss ideas that are pertinent to us as a society.</p> <p>Why? So that these students may grow up to participate in a democratic society as informed, educated citizens of this state and country.</p> <p>It saddens me to think there are groups out there attempting to keep high school civics from being a graduation requirement for all students in the State of Illinois. How are they going to be able to use their literacy skills to cast educated votes if they do not understand the very system that gives them the opportunity to do so? As citizens of this state, students need to understand how the government works—the roles of mayors, the governor, the General Assembly—in order to keep our state moving forward. High school civics should not only be an offered course in high school, it should be a graduation requirement.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>	Jill Flanagan Teacher, high school English Bartlett High School
69	I believe that Civics should be a required course in Illinois. In the short few months in this Civics class, I have already learned many things that are useful in the real world. An example would be learning the differences in the political beliefs. We were able to follow the Rauner/Quinn Governor election, and even had our own debate during class. Also, we learned about Active Citizenship. Even if everyone cannot be a good citizen, they should at least be forced to know what a good citizen is, and it could end up changing our lives for the better.	Student, Bartlett High School Senior
70	I believe taking a civics course should be required for all Illinois students to be able to graduate. I feel taking this course will better prepare us for the future and how the government works in our country. We have learned a lot so far and I believe it will be useful for students to learn about politics and how all the systems work.	Student, U-46
71	I feel like Civics is a really important course and everybody should take it because the importance of a civics class is more than what can normally be measured by some numbers. A generation of students taking a civics class can create a wave of democracy flowing throughout the people of the state, allowing the state to more influenced by the future generation.	Student, U-46
72	As a Social Studies teacher, I believe that if democratic knowledge is not groomed and protected it does not magically abound. We are responsible for the stewardship of maintaining a government “of, by and for the people.” This can only be accomplished by following the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force and requiring a mandatory Civics class at the high school level. There are countless studies showing the value of social studies education to future career and life success. Thank you for your consideration.	Kevin Dircks Teacher, social studies Bartlett High School

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73	<p>I appreciate the desire of the Civics Education Task Force committee to elevate the importance of Civics education in our schools. However, it should not come in the form of a mandated additional course. There are many mandates currently in place, many of which have been added in fairly recent past. Mandating additional courses should not occur unless previous mandates for additional “core” area courses are repealed or removed.</p> <p>The additional core course mandates that have occurred in the recent past have shown no positive link with increased standardized test scores (ACT data). These well intentioned mandates are harmful to students. They limit students’ ability to take elective Career and Technical Education courses which reinforce (and have been shown to increase test scores) the importance and relevance of math, technical reading, and critical thinking. In addition, the CTE courses can provide students with career direction and help business/industry fill many skilled positions that they are not always able to fill.</p> <p>The more mandates in our educational system is especially harmful to those it is trying to “help.” We need to better prepare students for today’s and tomorrow’s jobs, and provide a qualified, skilled work-force for our businesses. Please consider requiring embedding this into existing curriculum and/or removing other mandates that have proven to be ineffective, so we may leave room for students to take elective coursework.</p>	<p>Tom Frazier Director/Principal Bloomington Area Career Center Bloomington</p>
74	<p>I think civics should be required as a graduation requirement. Civics helps students learn about the government, active citizenship, and the foundations. Students need these to help them learn more about voting. As students grow older into adulthood, they have to pay taxes and become familiar with the law. Civics helps students <i>[sic]</i> the basics and without it students will have less knowledge on our government.</p>	<p>Student, senior Bartlett High School</p>
75	<p>I think that civics should be a required course. Everyone needs to know how the government works, and how things go down. For those who are younger than 18 and are not allowed to vote might not care, but when you are able to vote you will be clueless if not taken civics.</p>	<p>Student, U-46</p>
76	<p>I am writing to express my passionate belief that civics education is essential for high school students. As a 19 year social studies teacher in District U46 that does require civics education, I have had the opportunity to teach both Civics and AP US Government. I have first-hand witnessed hundreds of kids inspired to be more involved in their community and more aware of current events because of our civics class. As a parent and community member, it is always shocking to me how many adults I have encountered that do not understand politics and the available avenues to get their opinion heard. They don’t have an understanding of how the government works and what the responsibilities of the various governmental agencies are. All Americans should be familiar with their rights as well as familiar with where their tax money goes. They need an understanding of the bureaucracy and where to turn if they encounter an issue.</p> <p>As a teacher, I want to encourage my students to make their voices heard, whether it be through direct correspondence</p>	<p>Kristen Gac Teacher, Social Studies</p>



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	<p>or through casting their ballot on election day. We can only improve our society when we reduce apathy and get people involved. I truly believe people choose apathy not out of a lack of respect for our nation, but more from a state of confusion. If someone doesn't understand how government works or what is going on in their community, they may be too intimidated to participate.</p> <p>The Bartlett High School Vision Statement reads as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Every child; A student with a quest for knowledge; Every student; A graduate with a zeal for learning;</li> <li>▪ Every graduate; an individual with a worthwhile commitment to community.</li> </ul> <p>I believe students need to be exposed to civic education to form that commitment to community. I applaud District U46 for requiring all high school seniors to take a civics class, and encourage legislators to make it mandatory in all school districts.</p>	
77	<p>As an alumni of Oswego High School in Oswego IL, I am startled to have discovered of <i>[sic]</i> the recent removal of political science as a graduation requirement. I disapprove, and can therefore no longer stand behind the school board on the basis of this decision.</p> <p>In today's world, young students are very disenfranchised with what is going on given the political climate. Many do not even know where to vote. If we do not teach them the importance of being a participating member in society and what our democratic system is, how can we adequately say we are giving students, and our future, the proper tools for success. Having this class as graduation requirement will assure that all kids will get a basic understanding of the political system in our great country. People need to know what and why politics is the way it is.</p>	<p>Alan Mlotkowski Alumni of Oswego High School</p>

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78	<p>As Social Studies Chairman at Valmeyer High School in Valmeyer, Illinois I would like to make a few comments/recommendations to the Task Force.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardized US and Illinois Constitution Test—I have seen a wide variety of these tests throughout southern Illinois. Some are very easy and some are extremely tough bordering on unfair to the average student. Would it not be in the state’s best interest if there was one standard test for both the US Constitution and the Illinois Constitution? That way every student in the state is tested on the same basic material needed to graduate high school.</li> <li>If the task force agrees with the aforementioned recommendation then a standardized lecture/PowerPoint should be distributed to all districts so that Civics teachers would know what material needed to be covered prior to the tests.</li> <li>If the task force agrees then a panel of High School Social Studies teachers throughout the state should be the ones to develop said tests/lecture series.</li> </ul> <p>These ideas may take away local control, but it would standardize what every student in the state should learn about two crucial documents.</p>	<p>Robert M. Hawley Social Studies Chairman Valmeyer High School</p>

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79	<p>I strongly support the Task Force on Civic Education’s recommendations that high school education in IL include a formal course in civics and that both middle and high school students complete a service learning requirement. I understand that proponents of other learning domains oppose these requirements as potentially competing with their interests for scarce resources and class time. But one of the basic, core purposes of public education is—and always has been—to prepare our young people for full participation in our democracy. How many warnings do we need that we are not doing this well? Historically low levels of voter participation? The hijacking of elections by big money? Declining participation in institutions of civil society a.k.a. ‘Bowling Alone’? The low—and declining—public approval ratings of elected and appointed officials at all levels of government? Historically high levels of tax evasion? Students unable to list <i>any</i> of the Bill of Rights?</p> <p>Clearly, clearly public education in Illinois needs to focus <i>more</i>—not less—attention on the founding purpose for which it exists. And to do so, just as clearly, is language-rich (Exhibit A: Septima Clark, who made thousands of Southerners literate by teaching them to read the Constitution and thus enabling them to pass voter tests at the time), math-rich (Exhibit B: The Illinois budget), problem-solving rich (see Exhibit B), and, increasingly, technology-rich (Exhibit C: ‘538’, which is also math—especially statistics—rich).</p> <p>Sandra M. O’Donnell, PhD (consultant and former professor of Public Administration)</p>	<p>Sandra M. O’Donnell, PhD Consultant and former professor of Public Administration</p>
80	<p>Our school already requires 3 full-year courses in social studies.</p> <p>World History in 9th grade; American History in 11th grade; Government in 12th grade</p> <p>The civic part is taught in Government with community projects, discussions, etc. We really don’t need another social studies requirement. We are already doing more than what is required by the state.</p>	<p>Carolyn Sorrows Guidance Counselor Du Quoin High School DuQuoin</p>
81	<p>Thank you for your diligent work on this Task Force. As the educational landscape has readjusted first with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and now with the new common core standards being implemented, civic education in the United States is reaching a crisis point. Currently,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A mere 9 states require students to pass a social studies test to graduate from high school.</li> <li>▪ The National Center for Educational Progress (NAEP) conducts a national benchmark test in civics every 3 years. When the 2010 test was administered only 25% of students at the 4th, 8th and 12th grade were “proficient” in civics.</li> <li>▪ The NAEP test revealed that fewer than half of American eighth graders knew the purpose of the Bill of Rights on the most recent national civics examination, and only 1 in 10 students at the eighth grade level demonstrated acceptable knowledge of the checks and balances among the legislative, executive and judicial branches.</li> </ul>	<p>Sheila A. Smith President Consult, Inc. Sarasota, FL Chair/CEO Barat Education Foundation Chicago</p>

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	<p>It's bad enough that our American youth are failing on the NAEP, worse yet, in the main, is the fact that the civic education they receive is inadequate in scope. As early as 2004, Charles Haynes, senior scholar and director of education programs at the First Amendment Center, Freedom Forum noted:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">We have allowed the crucial processes and learning indispensable to productive citizenship to become marginalized. In too many schools today, hands-on experience that might teach and train young people in the vital tasks of citizenship remain untaught, un-experienced, and untested. ("Pathways to Civic Character")</p> <p>The evidence is overwhelming. No Child Left Behind unintentionally led to All Young Citizens Left Behind. As <i>It is a major failure of the educational reform...No Child Left Behind, that civics was left behind.</i>—Rick Shenkman, Professor of Political Science, George Mason University.</p> <p>It is especially problematic for youth from socially and economic disadvantaged groups. Research has shown they suffer from a "civic achievement gap." We need to do much better and much more in the arena of civics for those youth and for all of the nation's youth. To accomplish this, we need an expanded and enhanced approach to civics that moves beyond only "civic education" alone to also a focus on "civic competencies and engagement."</p> <p>I support the recommendations of the Task Force on Civic Education that Illinois include a formal course in civics and that both middle and high school students complete a service learning requirement. Unfortunately, the work and hearings of this Task Force is [<i>sic</i>] lost in a year when the majority of the American people are disengaged, disconnected, and disgusted with the current political process. That is tragic for the future of our democracy. Those that are engaged are the organizations educational and otherwise that do not want to see dollars invested in civic education as it may result in fewer dollars for their projects. I hope that is not the case because those entities need a citizenry capable of governing.</p> <p>An informed, active and participatory citizenry has been essential to the strength of our democracy from its very beginnings. Yet—at this crucial time in our history, when our nation faces challenges of unprecedented number and scope—we face an additional challenge of an altogether different kind. Sandra Day O'Connor, retired Justice of the United States Supreme Court, stated it directly: <b>"It is imperative if we are to survive as a nation that our schools teach civics. Knowledge and understanding about our system of government is not something that is handed down in a genetic pool: you have to learn it."</b> And yet, the majority of our children do not have a basic understanding of American history, civics and citizenship. For example, the National Assessment of Educational Progress Civics Test revealed that the majority of eighth graders were not able to explain the purpose of the Declaration of Independence. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and The American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) in "Restoring Balance between Academics and Civic Engagement in Public Schools" noted that students from every ethnicity do not seem to grasp basic concepts in history, government or citizenship and thus are not prepared to fulfill their adult responsibilities to our nation.</p>	

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	Math and science are important in our children’s education—equally important is civics. If our children continue to be ignorant in their understanding of their civic responsibilities and what it means to be an American, it doesn’t bode well for the future of our Republic.	
82	I just wanted to leave a few thoughts with you in regards to political science. This was in my opinion, one of the most important classes that I took in high school. It provided a lot of insight into how our government works, and helped me to be better able to understand what I was voting for. The reality of the situation is, it is too complex, and too important, of a curriculum to try and fit into a standard American history class. Understanding the American government is essential for the formation of educated, responsible voters. I highly recommend that a graduation requirement is instilled for a political science course. Thank you for reading,	Billy Hennessy Citizen
83	My name is Kendra Charest and I just recently graduated from Oswego High School in the spring of 2014 when the Political Science course was required to graduate. I feel that this course is essential. The youth is [ <i>sic</i> ] becoming more and more uneducated on how our government works. In that course, I learned a lot of valuable information on our government that I would never have been taught before. Since this course, I have been more interested in our government and more involved in political campaigns. I actually feel that my vote will be educated and effective in the upcoming election. It’s important that future voters are educated on how to be a good voter to better our country. We need future voters to form their own opinions. We are putting our democracy at risk if we do not educate the youth.	Kendra Charest Graduate Oswego High School
84	I agree that it is incredibly important to focuses on civic education in MS and HS. I believe, however, that adding another course requirement will cause unintentional negative consequences. Instead, I believe energy should be given to creating new social science standards, including those that focus on civic education and helping schools see how to integrate these standards into existing courses. Thank you.	Debbie Thomas Literacy/Social Science/Library Coordinator Springfield District 186 Springfield
85	My name is Barbara Laimins, a former social studies educator, who wishes to address the state of Civic Education in Illinois. After a cursory review of current mandates for the State of Illinois, one can easily determine the major focus is on reading, writing, math and science. The State also considers a semester of Health, Consumer Science, and Drivers Education to be important. But sadly, the only mandate for civic education is buried in the American History Curriculum. This is not adequate.  Students currently graduate with a cursory knowledge of their government and how it functions when it is taught within an American History curriculum that covers 200 plus years of history. Compressing American Government	Barbara Laimins Former social studies teacher West Chicago

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	<p>into the American History curriculum does not leave opportunities for discussion and debate, learning about details on how our government functions and no time for civic engagement.</p> <p>Less than 20% of voters went to the polls in the last election. Currently, a majority of the population receives their information through negative 30-second sound bites and cursory campaign literature. It is imperative that we develop an educated electorate that will become active participants in our democracy. This can be accomplished through a required semester of civic education for all high school students. Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out, each new generation is a new people that must acquire the knowledge, learn the skills, and develop the dispositions or traits of private and public character that undergird a constitutional democracy. Those dispositions must be fostered and nurtured by word and study and by the power of example. Democracy is not a “machine that would go of itself,” but must be consciously reproduced, one generation after another.</p> <p>I strongly believe that Illinois needs to join the forty other states that have a civic education semester requirement. Illinois students deserve the opportunity to practice the principles of representative government and become active citizens in our state and our country. Youth engagement in civic action can be transforming for the student and the community. Please consider and enact a required semester of civic education.</p>	
86	As a member of the United States Army and a former student of honors political science and AP government, I believe it is extremely important for civic studies to be mandated in public education. It creates an atmosphere of debate, thought, and the idea of challenging the norm. Without a basic knowledge of civic duties and how our Government works, our democracy is doomed to fail. We must educate our youth today so that they can be the leaders and thinkers of tomorrow. Remember, our freedom is always one generation away from disappearing and never coming back. Let’s prevent that possibility and keep our students educated on what it means to be an American citizen.	Michael Heidank Citizen
87	Political science should be a required course at OHS. It is a necessity for kids to learn how the country they live in is ran [sic] and how they can be active in all political processes and the importance of understanding the government.	(not provided)
88	I believe that civics should be a required course because a basic understanding of how the government works is a valuable set of information to have. This information seems irrelevant right now but in the future I’m sure this knowledge will come in handy. U-46 student	Student, U-46
89	I am Sister Kathleen Sinclair, BVM, and I am the Director of Student Activities at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.	Sister Kathleen J. Sinclair, BVM Student Activities Director

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	All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. <b>Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.</b> Thank you for your consideration of this request.	Carmel Catholic High School
90	I am writing on behalf of the need for political science education in the High School curriculum. It has been brought to my attention that Oswego High School has eliminated political science as a required course. This concerns me greatly and should concern any individual looking to better, not only the education system, but America’s entire working democracy. To require American History and not political science is essentially teaching a skewed recollection of America, an America that is currently in economic and social despair, and not teaching how to help/change/express in a systematic manner. The repercussions of this offensive step are long-term and short-term. Remember, please, that Oswego is the home of Dennis Hastert, former Speaker of The United States House of Representatives, a person who clearly understands the importance of political science education at a young age. High School students are fully capable of grasping political science thusly using education to mature in and with America. For this, I urge that we reconsider, and set an example that civic education is necessary for a working America.	Ryan Miller Former OHS student and 2 year member of Illinois Youth in Government
91	My name is Aaron Henricks, and I am a Social Studies teacher at Oswego High School. I am writing to show my support for mandated Civics Education in the state of Illinois. We always stress the importance of “real life” knowledge in anything that students do in class. I can see few things more valuable in the real world than stressing to students that they are citizens of the United States, and while that comes with many benefits, there are also expectations placed upon them. These expectations should include civic engagement. They should include becoming active, informed voters. They should include bettering their environment. To quote the Mikva Challenge, “Democracy is a verb.” To fully embrace this, EVERY student must learn about what they can do to change and better their world. Thank you.	Aaron Henricks Social Studies Teacher Youth and Government Advisor Oswego High School
92	I am writing to express my strong approval for instituting a civic education mandate for all students in the state of IL. I firmly believe that for students to become active and engaged citizens in the 21st century, that they need to have a strong foundation in the knowledge of how government works. In order for that knowledge to be adequately achieved, a mandated civics course at the high school level is needed.  While, I understand that this mandated course may take away time from other courses that could be taken, I strongly believe that a civics course only helps students to become more engaged in the world around them and also with the other classes that they may take. In the end, we want children that are educated and understand how the government works in order to achieve a knowledgeable workforce and citizenry.  Once again, please pass this mandate for all Illinois schools.	Scott White Social Studies Department Oswego High School



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93	<p>I think Illinois should require civics for the same reason all other classes are required: common sense. The main purpose of school is to supposedly prepare us for our future. Just like Math prepares you for technology, Biology prepares you for health care, and English prepares you for literature, Civics allows students to understand how our government works. Taking this into perspective, what sense would it make to be “prepared” for your future without a single ounce of knowledge about the government in the society you live in? I’m not sure about you, but being prepared for the future without government knowledge is just as prepared as a sandwich with no bread. Students need to understand how society runs—fair and simple.</p>	Student, U-46
94	<p>My name is Kelly Pecak and I have been teaching Social Science for the past 17 years at Maine West High School in Des Plaines, Illinois. I am writing in support of a state requirement for a civics course for all high school graduates in Illinois. Maine Township District 207 has always been a strong supporter of civics education. Our district does require that all students take American Government before they graduate. I am quite frankly shocked that some schools don’t. How can we have students leave high school without understanding their rights, how our complicated political system works, and ways they can make change in our society through the democratic process?</p> <p>The other day on my drive to work I was listening to NPR and the reporter was interviewing people who were registering to vote and they didn’t even know that Pat Quinn was our current governor! Sadly, I was not completely surprised because my own students often know very little about our government at the beginning of my American Government course. Yes, we do want to register more people to vote but we also want voters to be informed about how the system works, who is running the government, and to clearly understand the issues. The government affects almost everything in our lives from parks and schools, whether our food is safe or not, to sending troops to the Middle East. Certainly, all high school students should be required to understand how these decisions are made, whether or not they agree with decisions the government is making, and how they can exercise their rights as a citizen is <i>[sic]</i> this country to affect the decisions our government makes.</p> <p>I attended high school in New York State where a course called Participation in Government was required. It is one of the courses I clearly remember because my teacher connected what we were learning about our government to current events and to local government. I clearly remember participating in a debate about President Clinton’s health care plan, visiting a local courthouse and learning how to get an absentee ballot so I could vote from college. The knowledge and skills are I learned in that course were important no matter what occupation I later chose because I was always going to be a citizen.</p> <p>In our American Government classes at Maine West, we ask students to brainstorm the skills, knowledge, actions and attitudes citizens need to be effective citizens. We teach students the knowledge they need to know about our Constitution and how our government works at the local, state, and national level. However, we also teach them the skills they need to research an issue they care about or candidates’ views on issues, write a letter to a government</p>	<p>Kelly Pecak Teacher, Social Science Des Plaines</p>

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	<p>official, give a speech about their issue, and to take civic actions such as being an election judge, working on a campaign, and going to city council meetings. Some kids might find learning about the powers of Congress or interest groups boring, but when you tie all that they are learning to current events and controversial issues that affect them they start to pay attention. A few weeks ago one of my students said to me that what we were learning in American Government was actually useful. Shouldn't we be teaching all high school kids useful knowledge and skills about how to be effective citizens?</p> <p>My students do care about the future of this country and their futures. They care about the minimum wage, the increasing cost of college, immigration issues, our involvement in the Middle East, crime, teenage alcohol abuse, abortion, suicide prevention, racial profiling, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and many other issues. A required American Government or civics course can help all high schools students in the state of Illinois understand the complexities of these issues and how they can effect change for the issues they care about. Right now there are a lot of special interests, often very well-funded interests, who are influencing our government and we need to make sure that regular citizens know how to lobby for themselves too. Please strongly consider requiring that all high school students take a civics course before graduating high school in Illinois. Thank you for your time.</p>	
95	<p>I'm writing to urge you (ISBE) and members of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education to support a required civics course for high school education and to also implement a civics service requirement for both middle school and high school students. Indeed, I would strongly urge you to also consider requiring a civics course for middle school children. As a professor of political science at a major Illinois institution of higher education, I've had the opportunity for over the past 40 years to research and teach in the field of politics, government and civic education. It is very clear to me that students in Illinois and throughout the nation are often ill-prepared to both understand the complex public issues that face them when they graduate from high school and to engage in the serious public debate and participation required of our citizens. I understand that resources in the field of education are stretched and that demands and expectations for funding in any one of a number academic fields must draw on those resources. I'm simply arguing that our schools should be held accountable for educating our students in the field of civics and in facilitating their engagement in the democratic process.</p> <p>I urge you to adopt a state-wide program where civic education and engagement are taught and encouraged. This undertaking is no less important than the teaching of other academic, career and technical skills that we value and associate with our educational mission in Illinois.</p>	<p>Alan R. Gitelson Department of Political Science Loyola University Chicago</p>

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96	<p>It has come to my attention that some technical and career educators are recommending that you and the members of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education not endorse making civics a required course in high school and implementing a civics service requirement for both middle and high school students.</p> <p>This is written as a businessperson and citizen educated in Illinois who has authored a book titled <i>Renewing the American Dream: A Citizen's Guide for Restoring Our Competitive Advantage</i> to ask you to ignore that recommendation.</p> <p>Supporting it would do a tremendous disservice to the youth of Illinois and to the future of this great state. In my book, I present the evidence and make the case that what we desperately need is not less of an emphasis on civic education and engagement in grades K–12 but more. I will not go into a detailed rationale for this renewed focus on civics here. Suffice it to say that America and Illinois are suffering greatly from curriculum that stresses STEM but does little to nothing to develop the fundamental knowledge and skills required for informed citizenship.</p> <p>It causes me to raise the following question. What is the purpose of education? Our founding fathers and others such as John Dewey and Eleanor Roosevelt understood that the fundamental role of education was to develop good citizens. It is a sorry statement in the 21st century that we have lost sight of this formative role. It speaks volumes about the present state of our society and democracy that we do so. What speaks even more loudly about that condition are those who would oppose making some modest commitment to preparing future generations of Illinois citizens and civic leaders. Illinois has an incredibly rich civic history. Our students of today need to not only understand that history but to be empowered to write new chapters in it. For this reason, I ask you to endorse fully the agenda advanced by the Illinois Task Force as a starting point for restoring civic education to its proper place in the curriculum for students in grades K–12 in the State of Illinois.</p>	<p>Edwin T. Crego, Jr. Businessperson Citizen</p>
97	<p>I am a former high school student of Oswego High School in Oswego, IL. I have just been informed that Oswego High School has dropped Political Science as a graduation requirement and I personally think that is ridiculous. Political Science teaches young, future voters how our American Political system works and gives these students the knowledge to become educated voters one day. I believe that Illinois public schools should be mandated to have a Political Science course for students to take in order to graduate high school.</p> <p>I learned so much about how the American government works while taking Political Science in high school and I believe that course is what makes me an educated voter because I am aware of how the government runs. I have traveled abroad since graduating from Oswego High School and I use the knowledge I have gained from my Political Science course to accurately understand how not only our government works at home, but also on a global spectrum.</p> <p>Illinois should have a law that mandates Political Science courses for graduation in all Public High Schools because the knowledge students learn in the classroom really does impact their lives after they leave high school. Students that turn eighteen before the Presidential election during election years will have the knowledge to be an informed voter, if they</p>	<p>Camille Bafundo Former student Oswego High School</p>

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	choose to vote. The only way for each generation to grow into informed voters is by mandating high school students take a Political Science course in order to graduate from high school. I fully support Illinois having a law that mandates Political Science as a Graduation Requirement in Public High Schools.	
98	<p>I recently checked out the isbe.net website. I am familiar with this site as a former teacher. In response to the CETFR, I approve of the first 5 points in this document. I do have some concerns about the sixth point. I feel that social studies should be taught even as early as preschool. Based on the minutes each subject needs to be taught on a daily basis, Social Studies appears to be forgotten and left to be an elective. This is wrong. How can students be expected at [sic] act like informed citizens if they are not armed with the necessary information at an early age?</p> <p>I know that I would have been a more informed and empowered citizen if I had more opportunities to be civic minded at an early age. I am grateful for organizations such as the Citizen’s Advocacy Center in Elmhurst which works tirelessly to promote education and real life connections to democracy in practice.</p>	<p>Lucille Hilger Former teacher LaGrange Park</p>
99	<p>It has come to my attention that some technical and career educators are recommending that you and the members of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education not endorse making civics a required course in high school and implementing a civics service requirement for both middle and high school students.</p> <p>It is with disbelief that I write this message to you. I am a business person and a father of two adult men that were educated in the school system of our great State of Illinois. I have been a participative father in the school activities of my children and I am proud of the quality of education we have provided to our children in Illinois. I have participated as well in several organizations dedicated to the education of our children and I can’t understand how Civic Education can even be questioned... or abandoned!</p> <p>The fabric of our society and the strength of our nation rests squarely on the quality of its participatory citizens. Of educated citizens, that know and are proud of their heritage and participate actively on the civic life of the community. Civic Education fosters responsibility, engagement and the development of new ideas and social and economical progress—we know this from history! For this reason, I ask you to endorse fully the agenda advanced by the Illinois Task Force as a starting point for restoring civic education to its proper place in the curriculum for students in grades K–12 in the State of Illinois.</p>	<p>Antonio Pedroso Businessperson Father</p>
100	<p>I am a senior at Alcott College Prep (the second Democracy school in Chicago-land). I am a part of the Social Justice League as well as the Civics class at my school. Before attending Alcott College Prep I had attended a small Catholic school that was predominantly white and no one had ever heard of “student voice.” Everything that happened within the school was decided by the administration. After becoming a student here at Alcott, I realized that I had a voice and that my opinion mattered. My Civics class has given me the chance to further explore my voice and come to the realization that I am a part of creating the future. A Civics class can change a student’s life</p>	<p>Student Senior Alcott College Prep</p>

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	<p>one step at a time, and I can use myself as an example. In the past 2 months, my class has covered current events, written speeches about topics that they feel passionate about and worked on creating a plan to fix problems in our society. Throughout this process I have become a better student in the classroom, I have been able to connect the outside world with my education; therefore, I am more than engaged; I am taking action.</p> <p>I would like to propose the idea that a Civics class be a requirement for graduation in not only Middle schools, but in High schools as well. Doing this will only make our students better citizens in the world they must face, it will only create citizens who are not only personally engaged in their community; but activists in creating a better world for future generations. Many students, including myself have benefited from this class, imagine how many other students will take their Civics class and apply it to the rest of their life? Thank you for your consideration.</p>	
101	<p>I agree there is a need for more emphasis on civics education. However, I do not believe this emphasis should come as an additional graduation requirement. A study recently posted states that raising graduation requirements often has unintended consequences of increasing the dropout rate. In addition raising requirements rarely results in increased achievement according to the National Assessment of Education Progress. In looking at PSAE trend data in math from 2006–2012 during which time the math graduation requirement was raised, the additional course mandate has had no positive impact on standardized test scores. The same can be said for Language Arts. The dropout rate in Illinois has been between 16–20% during the last three years. Dropouts are less likely to be a competent and responsible citizen. Another course requirement could increase this already unacceptable number by taking away the opportunity to take classes in the elective areas, classes a student chooses.</p> <p>As stated in your recommendations, Civics education is multidisciplinary. For example, many CTE program areas of Agriculture, Business, Family &amp; Consumer Sciences, Health Occupations and Trades, Industrial and Engineering, have civics education imbedded in the curriculum. Students in Building Trades must work with City Hall to obtain building permits and must be familiar with BOCA codes, just to name one example. These courses also have student organization components such as FFA, FBLA, FCCLA, SkillsUSA, and HOSA. Students in these organizations volunteer, participate in fundraising and support community projects. This is also done in other clubs in both high school and middle school.</p> <p>If graduation requirements were raised, there would be one less time period for students to take an elective course, which includes courses in career and technical education. These courses are where students learn valuable work skills so that they can become gainfully employed at a respectable wage and would then be more likely to become a competent responsible citizen. According to the Gates Foundation, CTE students are more likely to complete high school. Please do not take away a class period in which students can chose a CTE course or other elective.</p> <p>Unemployment in Illinois is already high even though there are thousands of jobs that are going unfilled because people lack the skills to fill them. Again, these skills are taught in career and technical education courses. Illinois currently requires two years of social studies courses to graduate from high school. Civics education could become</p>	Deanna Benson BHS

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	part of that two years course requirement. We can agree that civics education is important but not at the expense of courses that teach students life and employability skills.	
102	I am a teacher at Proviso West High School in Hillside, IL. I am interested in advocating for you to keep the Civics program the same since adding another year requirement would devastate the time students will have for elective classes. Our school has a robust program of offerings to prepare students for college or career upon graduation and your proposed changes would infringe on the training time that goes into the [sic] each and every Career Technical Education class. I urge you to consider the domino effect it would have on our students who enjoy hands on experiences with real world applications. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.	Constance Jesukaitis Teacher Proviso West High School Hillside
103	<p>Requiring a third year of high school social studies—a course in Civics—is not something I would support. Career and Technical Education programs would suffer as a result. State Education Administrators need to accept the fact that not all students fit the mold of a good and knowledgeable citizen just because they were forced to listen to lectures and do reports about how they have a civic duty to be a certain type of person. Many of these educable minds need to develop skills and trades that will help them become employable. They will become better citizens by earning a living and fitting into society thanks to having learned a skill set for their future employment in which they show a sincere interest. Being required to have a course in civics is not going to enhance the high school graduates attitude toward gaining employment after graduation if not given the opportunity to have learned skills in high school that are geared toward gaining skilled employment.</p> <p>I work in the area of agriculture education. The students need to develop technical knowledge skills, people skills and critical thinking skills. A student’s interest level in gaining these attributes will come from a hands-on learning environment in a CTE subject area long before it is attained from a Civics lecture course.</p>	Gary Shupe Agricultural education
104	Please do not make Civics a required subject, as it will pull time and funding away from other electives. Thank you.	Juliana Pickford RN BSN CNA Instructor
105	<p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and technical education class opportunities. While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own.</p> <p>If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student take at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career. Our education system is focusing too much on “book smarts” and not enough on real world smarts. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use</p>	Cathy S. Wojcik Teacher Business Victor J. Andrew High School



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	in their future career. Please do NOT mandate another course. Imbed the “civics” into already existing courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school.	
106	<p>First off, please accept my sincere thanks for your hard work and attention toward the matter of civics education in the State of Illinois. As a person who has been active in her community, I fully appreciate and am aware of the import of this subject matter. There is one area of concern I want to bring to your attention. Civics education, as you sited, needs to be a part of K–12 education. If it is embedded properly into regular social studies curriculum throughout a child’s life, I believe there is no need for a “mandatory” additional class to graduate high school. Many schools are ahead of the State in this area, requiring service hours in order to graduate and having plenty of support and opportunities to involve our youth today within the surrounding community. When additional graduation requirements are made, graduation rates worsen. Adding civics will have a similar negative impact on our graduation rates as the proposed 4th year of math curriculum. Young men and women in high school need the elective classes maintained, whether it be band, art, career and technical (vocational) courses. There are plenty of statistics to demonstrate the improved graduation rates of student when they are actively engaged in these extra-curricular courses.</p> <p>Students who successfully graduate high school and move on to some sort of post-secondary education and/or vocational training are much more likely to be involved from a “civics” point of view than a high school dropout. It is imperative Illinois improves the graduation rate statistics. Please take these comments into consideration and continue the good work of embedding civics education into the overall K–12 education models within our State, but do not, add an extra mandatory graduation requirement to an already crowded schedule for today’s youth.</p>	Alice E. Argyelan Bourbonnais
107	<p>I am vehemently opposed to adding yet another requirement to the high school curriculum. Doing so drastically reduces a student’s opportunity to take courses which are elective in nature. This might include courses in the fine arts (music, band, art), foreign language, and a variety of Career and Technical Education courses including business, agriculture, health occupations, family and consumer science, and technical and engineering education. It is already far too difficult for students to accumulate credits in an elective curriculum because of previously mandated courses which seem to have had no real bearing on the improvement of state test scores or the number of students who graduate from high school (i.e., math, science, and English requirements).</p> <p>I also feel that by increasing mandated courses in the high school student’s curriculum might have a negative impact on our dropout rate. We are already losing too many students prior to graduation—16–20%, I believe. In order to keep students in school, the public schools must offer courses in the curriculum which are appealing to students—the aforementioned electives do just that. Please do not put yet another hurdle in front of our high school students over which they must jump in order to complete their high school education. There are a variety of civics principles incorporated into the courses which are already mandated or in the activities in which the students participate.</p>	Ron Hains Director Two Rivers Career Education System Beardstown



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108	<p>Please consider the impact of this new legislation in regards to Career and Technical Education. Right now students are required to plan carefully in order to fit CTE into their schedules with the current graduation requirements. My students will be seriously affected to the point of only taking one year or not being allowed to come to Career Center at all. My program is set-up to give the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity Early Childhood Education credential to my first year students and dual credit through Kankakee Community College or Prairie State College for my second year students. If my students did not come for the second year, they would not get the opportunity to earn free college credits. If this is a must for high school students, consider eliminating another credit or making it optional so that the students who want to get a head start on their careers can still get the advantages we have to offer. Thank you for your consideration.</p>	<p>Jennifer Leighter-Yeates Child Development/ Preschool Instructor Kankakee Area Career Center</p>
109	<p>Please, please, please do not require a third year of social studies in order to graduate from high school. This would be devastating to all elective classes, and would not be in the best interest of Illinois students.</p> <p>Civics education is incorporated into student organizations at my school, including student council, SkillsUSA, FFA and some of the work I’m doing with students as I sponsor the senior class. From your recommendations, I see that we agree—Civics education is multidisciplinary.</p> <p>Research has recently shown that raising graduation requirements can often have the unintended consequence of increasing the dropout rate. When the math graduation requirement was raised, (2006–2012) the additional course mandate has had no positive impact on standardized test scores (PSAE). Students who drop out are less likely to be responsible citizens. Illinois already has at least 16% of students dropping out of high school. Another course requirement could increase this already high number. If graduation requirements were raised, there would be one less time period for students to take an elective course, which includes courses in career and technical education. Here, students learn valuable work skills, enhancing their employability and chance of becoming a responsible citizen. The Gates Foundation even shows that CTE students are more likely to graduate from high school.</p> <p>Please do not take away a class period in which students can chose an elective. Thousands of jobs that go unfilled in Illinois because people lack the skills to fill them. Please remember, these and other skills are taught in career and technical education courses. Illinois high school students are currently required to take two years of social studies courses in order to graduate from high school. Civics education could easily become part of that two years course requirement. Students and schools are suffering over mandates already, and sadly, this does <i>sic</i> cure society’s ills. What about mandating foods and nutrition classes to combat the obesity epidemic, or parenting/child development classes to counter child abuse and neglect? We are dangerously close to mandating a student’s entire schedule with no chance of taking elective classes.</p>	<p>Chris Halweg Peotone Schools</p>

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110	<p>My name is Jim Vera, and I am the Social Studies Department Chair at Oswego East High School in Oswego, Illinois. Currently, I am desperately fighting for the return of a required Civic Education course to our district. It was decided last year that Political Science would be eliminated as a graduation requirement for both Oswego East and Oswego High School. Fortunately, we are making progress in getting it reinstated, as our district administration has started to see the light.</p> <p>Civic Education is a primary component of a good education. The fact that Illinois is in the overwhelming minority of states that does <i>[sic]</i> not require it to graduate is unfortunate, but correctable. I commend the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education for its fine work, and support this movement completely. We owe it to our students to make them good citizens, both within their community, and in the political world. We are all servants to our fellow man, and there is not a more noble cause for consideration. As a citizen of this great state, I think this graduation requirement would make this state even greater!</p>	<p>Jim Vera Teacher Social Studies Department Chair Oswego</p>
111	<p>My name is Jennifer Conlon and I am a Social Science teacher at Maine East High School in Park Ridge, Illinois. I teach primarily high school seniors, about 200 of them per year, and the subjects I teach are U.S. Government, AP U.S. and Comparative Government, and Law in American Society. I feel strongly that civic education is essential and that participatory learning projects are extremely beneficial to students.</p> <p>Over the course of my nine years teaching Social Science, I estimate, so far, that I have taught close to 2000 students. It is my absolute joy to teach and I look forward to it every day. The energy among high school students, especially seniors, on the verge of the rest of their lives is amazing and inspiring; it also creates a great obligation—to do my best to assure that they are as prepared as I can make them for the futures they will face.</p> <p>My own experiences have informed my practice. I was fortunate to attend a high school with lots of opportunities for critical thinking and to attend a state university, Western Illinois University, where I was elected Speaker of the Student Government Association. I worked for a member of Congress in Washington, D.C. for three years, attended law school at Georgetown where I participated in the Juvenile Justice Clinic, and practiced law in both D.C. and Illinois before beginning my teaching career ten years ago. I have been a Scout and youth leader and have held a number of leadership positions in community organizations. Why is any of this relevant? Because those opportunities for authentic experience were so instructive. Effective instruction combined with the opportunity to put learning into practice is a way to help students learn and to encourage lifelong learning. As students of history we know how important it is for people to be informed, involved, and willing to ask critical questions of those in power. As teachers in any field we know that students learn best when they can affix new learning to some pre-existing schema—provide an outline or structure for learning and then build out from that with metaphor and comparison, example, and experience.</p> <p>Foreign language students seek immersion, math problems are increasingly word problems, science is about experimentation, and the pedagogy for government should be no different; provide the opportunity for action. I</p>	<p>Jennifer Conlon Social Science Teacher Maine East High School Park Ridge</p>

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	<p>instituted participatory learning last year. My high school seniors, very busy people like all of us, have to provide ten hours of civic service or participation, from observing hearings, to working elections, to helping with park programs or food pantries. The first semester I required this, 88% of students completed the project for the full 150 points of credit, and they enjoyed it. Sure they worried about finding the time, but they did fit it in and were rewarded with the very genuine satisfaction of contributing to their community and helping to build the social fabric. They learned to make the overture, to follow up, to feel they belonged. Many went beyond the required ten hours. Many had stories to share. In a year filled with college applications, project deadlines, and concerns about grades, they found the service to be a gentle, meaningful connection to the larger world.</p> <p>Many will say that students should accomplish this service on a purely voluntary basis or that families will see that students have this opportunity. I might have felt that way, too, at some point, but I don't know. Family life is increasingly very busy. In addition, in my school, over 1/3 of the students were born in other countries, 2/3 of them speak a language other than English at home, and over 40% are from low income families. Not all parents have the time and resources to help their children make vital connections to the larger world. Schools benefit students and families when they provide these opportunities. We can't, as a society, expect students to value civic life if we don't prioritize it ourselves. We can't expect efficacy if we don't scaffold it in developing young adults. I encourage your support of civic education and service learning and urge you to support the recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education.</p>	
112	<p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and technical education class opportunities which help prepare today's students for BOTH career and college. While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept is and should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own.</p> <p>If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student take at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career. Our education system is focusing too much on theoretical academic knowledge and not enough on subjects that actually prepare the student to be a productive member of our global world. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use in their future career. Please do NOT mandate another course. Imbed the "civics" into already existing courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school.</p>	<p>Tamra S. Davis Assistant Professor Business Teacher Education</p>
113	<p>I am writing in opposition of the proposed Civics course graduation requirement. As a vocational instructor, this would significantly impact the vocational or fine art opportunities available to our students. Course requirements continue to increase limiting the number of electives students can take. Currently at Moline High School, students</p>	<p>Jay Bohnsack Teacher Computer</p>

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	<p>can earn 12 hours of college credit from Black Hawk College. If graduation requirements are increased, this opportunity will be significantly impacted. Also, please keep in mind that there is currently a House Bill (HB5621) currently in Rules Committee that would increase the number of math credits required for graduation from 3 to 4 (<a href="http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocTypeID=HB&amp;DocNum=5621&amp;GAID=12&amp;SessionID=85&amp;LegID=80715">http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocTypeID=HB&amp;DocNum=5621&amp;GAID=12&amp;SessionID=85&amp;LegID=80715</a>).</p> <p>Please consider the amount of requirements that are already required and the programs that will be eliminated based on this decision. I would urge you to not recommend an additional Civics requirement for high school graduation. Thanks.</p>	<p>Technology Moline High School</p>
114	<p>I am a middle school social studies teacher and I do not support an additional civics class mandate for high school students. These students are being bombarded with mandates and are having less and less opportunities to choose classes that interest them. Civics is already included in both the middle school and high school curricula. Another mandate would be overkill. Let's allow students to have some freedom in their schedule choices. Many elective classes are being whittled down to nothing, such as business, band, art, and industrial ed. These classes have value, but students do not get the opportunity to take them because of the mandates already in place for math, science, and English. No more mandates, please.</p>	<p>Janey McKillip Social Studies Teacher Weslin Middle School Trenton</p>
115	<p>After reviewing your report on Civic Education I agree there is a need for more emphasis on civics education. With that said, I do not believe that mandating an additional course is the answer. By continuing to mandate courses takes away student opportunity to take elective courses which data shows lowers the dropout rate among teenage secondary educational level students. Elective courses are the only means students learn skills that will make them productive citizens in their adult life. In fact, a few years back, there was a mandate to increase the math graduating requirement to 3 years. I have attached data that supports <i>[sic]</i> this mandate has not proven to increase math scores of our students. It would be more pertinent to evaluate the curriculum in the current Social Studies courses offered and refine this content. Thank you for reading my concern. I look forward in hearing your recommendation.</p>	<p>Christopher C. Kendall Director, P.E.R.F.E.C.T. Education for Employment Peoria</p>
116	<p>I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools. Each time a course is mandated, it reduces the opportunity for students to take elective courses such as career and technical education classes. While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be covered in social science existing curriculum rather than be a required course of its own.</p> <p>If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student take at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunities and experience that can help them in both college and their future careers. Our education system is focusing too much on “book smarts” and not enough on real world skills. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use in any career. Please do NOT mandate another course. Embed civics into already existing courses instead. Our</p>	<p>Heather Genesio CTE Director/ Business Instructor Pinckneyville Community High School Pinckneyville</p>

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	students need room to take elective coursework that interests them to give them marketable skills and help keep them in school. Thank you!	
117	I strongly urge ISBE to support the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education's recommendations—especially requiring all high school students in Illinois take a semester in civics. Public schools were created to educate students for participating in our democracy. In order to maintain our democracy, students must be taught vital civic knowledge and skills. Every student in Illinois deserves a high-quality civic education. Our democracy depends on it.	Carolyn Pereira Retired founder of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago and the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition Chicago
118	<p>I am writing to provide comments regarding the recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education Report pursuant to Public Act 98-0301. I currently serve as the Service-Learning Program Manager in the Center for Experiential Learning at Loyola University Chicago. I formerly served as the Manager of Democracy Education and Service-Learning at Chicago Public Schools so I have significant experience in the development and delivery of civic education strategies including service-learning.</p> <p><b>I fully support the Task Force's recommendation to require a civic education course in high school.</b> Illinois is one of only a few states in the union that does <i>[sic]</i> not require a government or civics course for graduation. To uphold and strengthen our democracy, our young people need to leave formal education (whether high school or college) with exposure to civics and government. It is of course entirely possible in the State of Illinois to graduate from college with no formal exposure to or training in civics and government. This should be rectified immediately.</p> <p>A core foundation of public education is its civic mission and purpose. Without formal opportunities to engage in this <i>[sic]</i> questions and practice democracy through civic learning opportunities such as service-learning, simulations, etc., we are at risk of falling further behind the other states in preparing our students for active engagement in our democratic processes and traditions. Three years ago I led the team at Chicago Public Schools to design and launch the Global Citizenship Initiative and its cornerstone Civics course. We utilized proven civic education practices throughout the curriculum (<a href="http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/the-campaign/guardian-of-democracy-report">http://www.civicmissionofschools.org/the-campaign/guardian-of-democracy-report</a>) and were committed to the “new civics”, which emphasizes engaging, active participation inside and outside the classroom (<a href="http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/06/96/10696.pdf">http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/06/96/10696.pdf</a>). Today, 30 CPS high schools are implementing the course with more than 1,500 high school juniors and seniors. We need to do more. At one of our high schools, students rallied to present a petition to the school principal asking for a second year of Civics. Today, Alcott College Prep offers two Civics classes for students! Surely we can find space <i>[sic]</i> our education enterprise</p>	Jon Schmidt Service-Learning Program Manager Center for Experiential Learning Loyola University Chicago

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	<p>to teach students about government and civics...it is critical to our development as a democracy in Illinois and that nation.</p> <p>I support the Task Force’s recommendation <b>to require a service-learning project in middle and high school with one provision</b>....there must be appropriate professional development for teachers, engagement with community partners, and, ideally, funding to support project implementation. I would not support a recommendation that requires students to gather service hours on their own. We did that in Chicago Public Schools and implementation is very uneven and there’s a dramatic inequity in accessing quality opportunities. Research demonstrates that the true civic power of service-learning comes when students are engaged for a minimum of 15–20 hours on a project and when the service is integrated with classroom instruction. We have hundreds of examples throughout the city where this is taking place in very, very meaningful ways. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.</p>	
119	<p>While I agree that Civics Education should be part of the curriculum I absolutely do not think our Illinois high school students should be burdened with yet another mandated course. These mandates, however well intended, only serve one purpose and that is to increase our student dropout rates and their disinterest! Our Illinois high school students need more opportunities, not less, to choose their electives especially when those courses have relevance to their career path post high school. Civics Education and Service Learning Opportunities could easily be integrated into the current list of mandated courses.</p> <p>I truly hope you will consider all other options before mandating more unnecessary course work for Illinois students. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.</p>	<p>Sally Shawver Project Manager Eastern Illinois Education for Employment System Mattoon</p>
120	<p>Thank you for considering the recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education. My name is Terri Hanrahan and I have been an educator for 29 years. I have served as a Social Studies Teacher, Building Level Administrator and now a District Level Administrator. Though I have a particular interest in and passion for the Social Studies, I have for the past decade had specific responsibilities to ensure the development of the whole child. I firmly support specials/electives in our schools. Access to the Fine Arts and Industrial Arts is vitally important for our children. However, Civics is of equal importance. Research conducted by the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute demonstrates that the majority of registered voters in Illinois favor both a required high school civics course and required service projects in middle school and high school.</p> <p>In an educational climate that has seen the deterioration of disciplines outside of Math, Science and Language Arts, I know why Elective Teachers are concerned about any new mandated courses. There is always a fear that another mandated course would lead to a further deterioration of the Fine and Industrial Arts. In this case, I think the fear is unwarranted. Public universities require three years of high school Social Studies for admission. Overwhelmingly, high schools across the state have the same three-year requirement for Social Studies. Having a required Civics Course will</p>	<p>Terri Hanrahan Assistant Superintendent Former Social Studies teacher District 88 Plano</p>



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	<p>not decrease a student’s opportunities to access the arts because it does not require more Social Studies. Rather it specifies which Social Studies courses to take, while still leaving options for other electives within Social Studies.</p> <p>Today is Election Day. I have read several reports that indicate Illinois will have less than 20% of registered voters exercise their right to vote. Public trust of our government at all levels is at an all-time low. We cannot assume that future generations will learn how to be good citizens by themselves. We used to train our young people in active citizenship. We educated them about their rights and their responsibilities as citizens. When we stopped we saw a decrease in trust in society and a general inability to engage in productive and respectful civil discourse. We are in desperate need of a robust civics course that not only educates students about the role and function of government but also calls them to be active participants in their community.</p> <p>Franklin Roosevelt said, “Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.” There is a path to strengthen our democracy, improve our state and help students be more fulfilled and happy. I would ask that you seriously consider the recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education.</p>	
121	<p>Being an educator of over 20 years in IL as a high school business teacher, I feel that I cover in my content alone in teaching business about civics content in high school. I am <i>[sic]</i> have a B.S. in business along with an M.B.A. degree along with a doctoral degree along with other master(s) degrees and feel that students today in high school need to be able to take elective classes to understand their future career paths. Please vote “NO” for adding another required civics class in high school. Thank you very much!</p>	<p>Alana Halsne-Baarda Former teacher, business</p>
122	<p>Every 12 seconds one United States student drops out of school. According to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, nearly 50% of dropouts said they “left school because their classes were boring and not relevant to their lives or career aspirations.” If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be at least one career and technical education course. These courses give the students <i>[sic]</i> knowledge and experiences that will benefit them in college and/or in the world of work. Civics is important but it should be included in the already required curriculum that includes the constitution test, etc. It should NOT be a separate mandated course.</p>	<p>Darlene Shannon Illinois FBLA-PBL State Chairman Carbondale</p>
123	<p>As a civics teacher for the past fifteen years, it is increasingly important for secondary schools to incorporate civics education into the curriculum. Our school has recently instituted an action civics component to the curriculum. Students must engage in some active citizenship (board mtgs, rally, go <i>[sic]</i> out the vote drive, grassroots mobilization) and write a short FRQ on their experience which asks them to analyze active citizenship compared to simply voting. Students have thrived from this. Students were engaged in the election process and have become more thoughtful discussants in our democracy. Classrooms discussions have flourished and this type of civics education is a vital component to a liberal democracy. Education <i>[sic]</i> our future voters to engage in <i>[sic]</i> one of the most important tasks we have as educators. Thank you.</p>	<p>Vanessa Lal Teacher Civics, AP Government Adlai E. Stevenson High School Lincolnshire</p>



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124	I am a senior at Alcott College Prep (the second Democracy school in Chicagoland). I value civic learning experiences like being a part of our social justice league club, conducting surveys, discussing social and political issues in classes, leading activities, as well as creating and delivering speeches because those same experiences are ones that I will take with me to college and beyond. They also helped developed my leadership skills and increase my confidence in discussing issues in my life that I feel are worth being discussed. I believe that all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experiences because the more people are aware of issues and have the skills to present them in a civic manner, the increased possibility of those issues being addressed or even solved. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Senior Alcott College Prep
125	I am a student at Alcott College Prep. Just recently, Alcott was awarded with the Democracy School Award. We are the second Chicago Public School to be known as the Democracy school. I believe that being a Democracy School, it is important that we have Civics class. Personally, civics is the only class that I can benefit in the future in terms of career skills that I will need. For example, Civics taught me how to tackle issues one step at a time and it taught me that being aware of current issues is important. I think all students should be given civic learning experiences because people need to be aware of the issues that are happening around us, but most importantly, it is important to go in depth on learning these issues and students have great ideas on how to encounter these issues. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep
126	I'm a student at Alcott college Prep the second democracy school in Chicago land. I value civics class because I think its [sic] very important to find solutions going on in your community. We should all be aware of the things going on and fighting together to make a change. I think all students in Illinois should be given civics learning experiences because they could make changes and could have there [sic] voice heard like everyone else. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep
127	I am a Senior at Alcott College Prep (the second Democracy school in Chicago land). I value civic learning experience like SGA (Student Government Association) because it allows me to share my personal thoughts and opinions on different issues. Not only that, but everybody has the chance to speak which means everyone has a voice and no one is left out. I think all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experience because it will allow them to speak up and have a voice for themselves instead of being afraid of what someone may think when they add their input to a topic being discussed. No one deserves to be looked at less than a person because of what they believe. With civic learning experience a change will occur. Patience is the key so please do us all a favor and let every student and civic learning experience meet. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Senior Alcott College Prep
128	I am very concerned about the possibility of yet another mandated course requirement for our Illinois public schools that will cut down even more on the possibility of students getting any elective course such as career and	Ben Brooks Teacher

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	technical education class opportunities. While civics is certainly an important topic, I feel this concept should be included in already existing curriculum requirements rather than be a required course of its own. If any new courses are going to be mandated, it should be that every student take at least one career and technical education course to provide students with real world career opportunity experience that can help them in both college and their future career. Our education system is focusing too much on “book smarts” and not enough on real world smarts. Career and technical education courses provide students with real world experience they can use in their future career. Please do NOT mandate another course. Imbed the “civics” into already existing courses instead. Our students need room to take elective coursework that they are interested in to help keep them in school.	Art, Welding, and 3D printing O’Fallon Township High School O’Fallon
129	I think that civics is important because we as students get involved with this class a lot & it help <i>[sic]</i> us to understand politics & to get involved with our community.	(not provided)
130	I am a student at Alcott College Prep. I value civic learning experience like students being able to change things in school and take action instead of just sitting back and letting the adults handle it because I feel no one ever listens to us students so it gives us a voice to speak and change what we want. I think all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experience because they will be able to learn more about politics and what’s happening around us and just have a voice and be able to change things in their schools. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep
131	I am a student at Alcott College Prep (the second democracy school in Chicago). I value civic learning experience like my civics class because it shows me how to become a more self-advocate person and shows me that I do have a voice. I think all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experiences like civic class, rhetorical throw downs, soapbox speech days and a student government in their school because its <i>[sic]</i> an important skill to be <i>[sic]</i> self-advocate in America today and everyone should have that opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep
132	My name is Rosa and I am a student of Alcott College Prep ( the second Democracy school in Chicago). I value civics learning experience like social justice league club or doing surveys because it make me feel like I have an chose <i>[sic]</i> in what I what <i>[sic]</i> my school to have. I think all students Illinois should be given civics learning experience because it help <i>[sic]</i> people understand each others <i>[sic]</i> opinion. Thank you for you <i>[sic]</i> consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep
133	My name is Karina and I am a student at Alcott College Prep. I value civic learning experience like, having the chance to voice your opinion no matter who you are because it can change the way us students think and prepare us for the future. I think all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experience because not everyone has a chance to voice what they think. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep
134	My name is Alberto and I am a student at Alcott College Prep (the second Democracy school in Chicagoland). I value civic learning experience like Classroom debates because it gives us the opportunity to express ourselves on	Student Alcott College Prep

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	problems that we care about. I think that all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experiences because it can take a lot off of the students and they will feel like <i>[sic]</i> have their voices heard and that is what matters. Thank you for your consideration.	
135	My name is Amira and I am a student at Alcott College Prep (the second Democracy school in Chicagoland). I value civic learning experience like soapbox because I think students should have a chance to speak out and let everyone know what bothers them. I think all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experiences because its <i>[sic]</i> a good way to share something that affects you greatly. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep
136	My name is Makayla and I am a student at Alcott College Prep (the second Democracy school in Chicago). I value civic learning experience like Senior Leaders, a class I am currently taking. I value this class because it enhances your leadership skills and teaches you how to work with others. I think all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experiences because is <i>[sic]</i> will prepare them for the real world as far as daily interactions with others and workplaces. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep
137	My name is Kenneth and I am a student at Alcott College Prep. I value civic learning experience like civic class because I enjoy helping and fighting for things that I believe in. I think all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experiences because its <i>[sic]</i> a great opportunity for students and teachers to be apart <i>[sic]</i> of something more then <i>[sic]</i> just in the class. Thank You For Your Consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep
138	My name is Dasia and I am a junior at Alcott College Prep (the second Democracy school in Chicagoland). I value civic learning experience like soapbox because I believe that everybody not just only adults, but teenagers as well deserve to get there <i>[sic]</i> voice hear; <i>[sic]</i> about a topic the <i>[sic]</i> really care about. I think all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experiences because it helps you in your day to day life experiences. It helps you become apart <i>[sic]</i> of your community and involved in things or discussions that most teenagers wouldn't understand. Thank you for your consideration.	Student Junior Alcott College Prep
139	Hi my name is Toni and I am a student at Alcott college Prep (the second democracy school in Chicago). I value civics learn experiences like Speaking in from of a large group of people because it helps me boost my self-confidence and helps me speak better in front of people I don't know.	Student Alcott College Prep
140	My name is Jalen and I am a student at Alcott College Prep (the second democracy in Chicago). I value civic learning experience like learning about the way money is distributed throughout society because it makes people happy and get <i>[sic]</i> them what they want/need. All students should be getting civics learning experience because they need to know not only what the class is about but how to be a better person throughout your life. Thanks for your consideration.	Student Alcott College Prep

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141	<p>While illiterate citizens are not expected to read, uneducated voters are expected to be viable participants in our complicated government system. Please do what you can to bring Civics back to the classroom so we can return the United States to the role of leadership by having citizens that participate in government with intelligence and understanding. No more ignorant screaming. At the least, these points should be standard in the education of every American Student in Public Education.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Require a stand-alone civic education course in high school;</li> <li>2. Revise the Illinois Social Studies Standards;</li> <li>3. Require a service learning project in middle and high school;</li> <li>4. Align licensure and certification requirements for pre-service teachers with best practices;</li> <li>5. Provide access to professional development aligned to best practices in civic education; and</li> <li>6. Involve students in the election process.</li> </ol> <p>Thank you so much for your efforts, and we look forward to helping you get results.</p>	John R. Rosak Citizen
142	<p>I was prompted to write by an email from the Citizen Advocacy Center. I strongly encourage a restoration of civics in K–12 schools. HOWEVER, I am extremely concerned by some of the “summary recommendations” of the Task Force:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Require a stand-alone civic education course in high school;</i> Yes, indeed. But we must also restore civics to the junior high school level as well. “Civics” was a common one semester course in most Illinois school [<i>sic</i>] years ago. The material that “civics” covered years ago got watered down when it was subsumed under the mantle of “social studies.” Worst case example: the textbook used at New Trier High School for an “American studies” class which gives one-sentence descriptions of 4 of the Bill of Rights, and says nothing at all about the other 6.</li> <li>2. <i>Revise the Illinois Social Studies Standards;</i> STRONGLY DISAGREE. No government should be involved in mandating what students must learn about government. That is simply dangerous. If such an effort is mounted, great care must be taken to ensure that a spectrum of political and civic concerns are addressed.</li> <li>3. <i>Require a service learning project in middle and high school;</i> STRONGLY DISAGREE. The potential for abuse, bias, and great loss of learning hours is enormous.</li> <li>4. <i>Align licensure and certification requirements for pre-service teachers with best practices;</i> EXTREME DISAGREEMENT. That phrase “best practices” has been used to impose all manner of dubious pedagogy on teachers that had been effective until then. We should be <i>reducing</i> certification requirements in order to attract highly skilled people to the profession of teaching, not raising the wall that keeps them out. Tying certification to so-called “best practices” is even worse, it’s a recipe for disaster.</li> </ol>	Kevin Killion Arlington Heights

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	<p>5. <i>Provide access to professional development aligned to best practices in civic education</i>; EXTREME DISAGREEMENT. This is even worse. Who decides what are the “best practices”? Who decides what “professional development” is offered? The potential for abuse and bias is extreme.</p> <p>6. <i>Involve students in the election process</i>. Reasonable, but caution is crucial. It is imperative that any such activities respect and encourage an intellectual diversity of perspectives, opinions, and causes.</p> <p>I appreciate the opportunity to offer these comments.</p>	
143	<p>My name is Tyson and I am a student at Alcott College Prep (the second democracy school in Chicago). I value civic learning experience like soapbox because I think all students should be given a chance to speak on issues that they [sic] truly feel passionate about. You can speak your mind in a way that adults as well as other students will actually pay attention to. I think all students in Illinois should be given civic learning experiences because it gives students another view on certain topics. It opens up a new mindset that could possibly help make a better community. It gets students involved in projects and groups that they may not have been involved in before. Thank you for your consideration.</p>	<p>Student Alcott College Prep</p>
144	<p>I am a former student of the We the People program at Maine South High School and can say with certainty that the choices I have made to be civically involved and engaged were sparked by the formative civics class I had in high school. After being in the We the People program, I decided that I wanted my career path to be about promoting civics and educating others about government. I have worked for a variety of civic organizations over the last 15 years. Although my career path into nonprofit administration was directly shaped by my civics class, I run into former teammates in a multitude of careers including real estate, journalism, professional poker, and physical therapy.</p> <p>Yet, the impact of We the People rings true for all of us in the same way. We are all much more likely to debate politics and talk about the issues of the day. These casual conversations are so important to a functioning democracy. People need to feel they can talk about government in an informed way with each other so that our democracy continues to be about the people. The way we do this is through education.</p> <p>In high school, the We the People program challenged me to defend my opinions and form coherent arguments. I found skills I didn’t think I had and couldn’t get out of any of my other classes. These are skills needed not just by lawyers but by all community members in order to be successful leaders. For these reasons, I support the recommendation for requiring civics as a high school graduation requirement.</p>	<p>Natale Fuller Alumnus, We the People Program Board Chair, Illinois Center for Civic Education Program Specialist, American Bar Association Chicago</p>
145	<p>This e-mail is in support of a state requirement for civic education at the high school level. I taught at the high school level for 35 years. I am convinced that civic education is essential to our nation’s [sic] survival. Our students are getting through school with virtually no knowledge of the history and values that make up our country. They know nothing of our founding fathers. They think their ignorance is funny and laugh about it. However, it is not a joking matter. Today, thousands of school children are reciting the words of our pledge without having a clue about</p>	<p>Patton Feichter Illinois State Coordinator, We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution</p>

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	what those words mean. They go to football and baseball games and hear the national anthem without knowing what the history or significance of those words mean. They don't know about Ft. McHenry or the War of 1812. And they don't care. Our kids today have no idea why we celebrate the 4th of July. They don't know it is our nation's birthdate and that the Declaration is our birth certificate. They only know about picnics and fireworks. They don't have a clue. Isn't that sad? We need in Illinois a high school level civic education course. Our Democracy depends on enlightened citizens.	Trustee, Elk Grove Village
146	I support teaching Civics in High Schools. We need educated and informed citizens! The Illinois State Board of Education agrees. Please consider their findings and the support that has been shown for this. Thank you for your consideration.	Mary Griffin Citizen Rockford
147	It is vital that today's youth, who value cynicism about government over actual learning about it, that <i>[sic]</i> government can be a positive element in people's lives and that there are good ways for them, even in high school, to become involved in their civic governance. Not only should every student be required to take a civics course in high school, but those civics classes should include opportunities for meeting and interviewing local politicians.	Scott Casper Citizen Hanover Park
148	I am writing in support of the proposal to require the teaching of high quality action civics in high school. I am both a parent, with high school age children, and an educator. Specifically, I teach US Constitutional Law in a public law school. I am often dismayed by the lack of knowledge of basic concepts of US government and lack <i>[sic]</i> knowledge of the US Constitution demonstrated by my students. We have witnessed a decline in participation in government in a variety of ways, the most obvious being a decline in voting. I attribute some of this decline to a lack of understanding of and emphasis on the importance of participation in government. For our representative democracy to function properly, and for our government to continue to be "of the people, by the people and for the people", we must have an electorate that has a basic understanding of how law is made and how government operates.	Cindy Buys Teacher Constitutional Law Parent
149	Civics is very important to teenage learning. It shows the power of youth voice and the importance of youth unity. If it wasn't for civics while I was attending Alcott, I would probably never understood that. My experience impacted me tremendously. From discussions on what affects us as teenagers, to how we plan on attacking it. One of my most memorable moments was the walking tour we had for the community. It showed me how segregated a community could be; however, it showed me tasks on how to make a community better. So I believe that civics should be an essential need to every high school. Alcott's civics community demonstrates the power of youth voice and unity and also how strong a community/environment could be thanks to civics.	Derrick P. Former student Alcott
150	As Social Studies Chairman at Valmeyer High School I would like to thank you for taking open comments on Civics education in Illinois. One item I would like to see addressed is that I think it would be in the best interests of teachers and students if the task force recommended very clear and concise standards be implemented when the	Robert M. Hawley Teacher/Chairman



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	<p>new Illinois Social Studies Learning Standards are implemented. As a teacher for the past 20 years I truly believe the standards to be extremely vague and without clarity as to what should be taught in classrooms across Illinois. As Illinois teacher evaluations get tied to student performance and growth on state testing it would be in the best interest of all of the parties if teachers actually knew what material they are expected to teach in their classrooms. Sweeping generalities and vague guidelines do not do anybody associated with education any good.</p> <p>If teachers were to actually have clear and concise learning standards for the classrooms then students would have a greater opportunity to do well on state testing. If teachers' evaluations are to be tied to state testing then teachers must be given the proper tools to succeed. The following is an analogy to clarify what I mean: If a teacher focuses on political theories of John Locke and Thomas Paine and then dives deeply into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, but then the state test focused on minority housing in Chicago during the 1960's. Years ago when there used to be a Social Studies section on the state test there was an entire section within devoted to public housing in Chicago. Students in downstate Illinois did not see the relevance of the section. I would like clear and concise expectations going forward, not polysyllabic vocabulary words that have no real meaning and offer no real guidelines on what all Illinois students should know about the workings of their nation.</p>	<p>Social Studies Valmeyer High School Valmeyer</p>
151	<p>A civics requirements for high school students would allow all young people to obtain the tools to be prepared and engaged in their local and national governments and those government decisions. After all, we call them "our future leaders" so why don't we give them every opportunity to be informed, to be the best leaders! As a former elected official I feel every high school student should have basic knowledge of how and why government was established and the process that is followed to this day.</p>	<p>Margaret Fuller Former Trustee and Mayor Village of Harwood Heights</p>
152	<p>My name is Jessica Collins and I am an agriculture instructor and FFA advisor in Flanagan, Illinois. I urge you to reconsider adding another year of social science for high school students as it would be detrimental to many elective classes offered in schools. These elective classes are vital for students as they allow them to find a subject they are interested in and learn about more specific areas that could lead to potential careers in their future. I understand that it is important for students to understand civics but within agriculture classes, students get many experiences in this area.</p> <p>Many agriculture programs focus on helping in the community and volunteering when needed. We also teach our students about parliamentary procedure and how to properly conduct meetings. Finally, students are given numerous leadership opportunities through FFA and have the ability to attend various conferences that teach students about leadership and how they can have an impact on local communities. Agriculture classes as well as other elective classes allow students to get hands-on experiences and help them grow as an individual and requiring another year of social science would have a negative impact on allowing students to grow within a certain technical area.</p>	<p>Jessica Collins Teacher Agriculture Flanagan</p>



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153	<p>My name is Rochele Rosa, Section 5 FFA President and recent graduate of Midland High School in Varna, IL. I understand that this Civics proposal is meant to enrich high schools with more Civics classes, but from my own experience I can honestly say that Civics cannot be taught out of a textbook and must be taught through practice. The FFA program's 3 circle model for education has enabled me to utilize civics through the various competitions in Parliamentary Procedure and Public Speaking as well as through numerous conferences such as the Heritage and Cooperative Tour through Washington DC, wherein students learn about the ethics of our country's Founding Fathers and leaders throughout our history.</p> <p>Not only have I learned about how our country is operated and the values on which it has stood throughout time, but I have taken those values into practice through the countless community projects that are essential to the FFA program. I recently participated in the FFA National Day of Service wherein youth from all across the country strive to make a difference in our communities by helping out in food banks, cleaning up park districts, and various other needed activities. These experiences were never offered to me through my high school, but through the Illinois Association FFA which holds charters in 320 schools throughout the state. If enrichment is what you are aiming for in Illinois classrooms, then supporting FFA electives is what is needed to make a better education for the students of tomorrow.</p>	<p>Rochele Rosa Former student, Midland High School Section 5 FFA President</p>
154	<p>The idea of civil participation in government is the foundation upon which our Constitution rests. There is given valid argument that democracy and further complication of Republicanism is the most complex and inefficient form of governance devised by man. Yet at the same time it is held as the highest and most advanced aspiration of man. The conclusion of such an observation can only be accounted to the simple fact that we, as a nation given committee to such form of government, are willing to bear the price of such inefficiencies so that we can hold our government in contempt of what we think proper and just.</p> <p>Yet the proliferation of that idea to the generations of our posterity does not originate from conception but rather by education. We must never forget the importance of bearing our civic duties as the mortar and brick of our Liberty, the lubricant of the operations of our Republic. As our great President Reagan upheld, "Freedom is never one generation from extinction... It is not passed down in our bloodlines but rather passed on as values from one generation to the next." So henceforth if we hold ourselves truth [<i>sic</i>] to our commitment, then it is necessary and proper that we ensure the endowment of our future with the ability to comprehend and decide their course in politics and the measures to ensure such starts in the classrooms and dinner tables of America.</p>	<p>Kevin Du Turning Point, USA</p>
155	<p>My name is Alyssa and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School, we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.</p>	<p>Student, Carmel Catholic High School</p>

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156	My name is Erin and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School, we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democratic Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and learning about service. We are the people of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. Please adopt the recommendation of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
157	My name is Kylie and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools, I believe, with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic education across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. I truly believe that this addition to the school curriculum would foster civic engagement in the local and global community as well as augment important character attributes such as critical thinking and academic curiosity. Thank you for your time.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
158	My name is Kelsey and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a democracy school we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be democracy schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon our informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the democracy schools we are a state and nation at the risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Course. Thank you for your consideration.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
159	My name is Niki and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. Please adopt the recommendations of Task Force. Thank you for your consideration.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
160	My name is Morgan and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, and service learning, and includes a government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
161	My name is Jordan and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/governments course, and demonstrates civic	Student, Carmel Catholic High School

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	engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	School
162	My name is Jacqueline and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of use, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes, of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizen. This is why civic education is essential.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
163	My name is Mia and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a democracy school we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service leaning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extracurricular activities. All of us, regardless or our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship a are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the task force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
164	My name is Maeve and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. Carmel is a registered Democracy School and because of the support given by my school I am more educated in civic measures and have completed more than 400 hours of service. I am writing to you today because I believe all schools in Illinois should be democracy schools. A school culture that respects and promotes student voice in the government as well as service to the community is essential in order to develop the younger generations into effective citizens of Illinois. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation in risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
165	My name is Ryan and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School, we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School

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	Comments	Name and Role
166	<p>Hello. My name is Mary and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extracurricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home, so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools, we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.</p>	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
167	<p>I am Dustin Voss. A CPS High School Teacher here at Fenger. I helped develop the district’s Civics Curriculum. I can attest that students need to be engaged in this type of activity. Seeing that their research and writing has a real audience and can make a difference in public policy has had a huge impact on my students. Last year when my civics students learned THEIR recommendations for reducing truancy were heard in the state legislature, the entire class transformed and I had as much “buy-in” I’ve ever had as a teacher (7+ yrs.)</p> <p>Additionally, students are eager to learn how Government works and is influenced. Citizens ought to know how their government functions, how to vote, how people in the past have influenced government. And with shrinking budgets, testing demands, and the focus on “literacy,” I ask you please to include civics literacy into a graduation requirement for IL students.</p>	Dustin Voss, Teacher Social Science Fenger Academy High School, Chicago Public Schools
168	<p>My name is Emma and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a democracy school we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be democracy schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/governments course, and demonstrates civic engagements across the curriculum and extra-curricular activity. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.</p>	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
169	<p>My name is Ian and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be a Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civic/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead form the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.</p>	Student, Carmel Catholic High School

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170	My name is Nick and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a democracy we value and support civic education and service learning. As a student here for 4 years I have had plenty of time to realize the importance of a service and government curriculum. Regardless of career plans, civics is an integral part of being an active and productive citizen in our nation. Please adopt the findings of the task force in order to foster a more productive community and country.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
171	My name is Ellen and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a democracy school we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. If we do not take the lead from the Democracy schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the task force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
172	My name is Kayla and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be democracy schools with a school culture that respects and promote student voice and service learning, includes a civics/ government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extracurricular activities. All of us regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes of affect citizens [sic] are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the democracy schools we are state in the nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the task force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
173	My name is Samantha and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force. A democracy can only succeed if the participants are intelligently participating in it.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
174	Students in the 21st century will need a much broader and deeper understanding of US culture, history, society and government than has been true in the past. At the same time they will also need to know more about the rest of the world and our relationship to other nations and peoples. While knowing dates, famous people and, battles and wars is not unimportant, there needs to be less emphasis on these items. Rather the focus should be on the different	Christopher Melby Citizen Rolling Meadows

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	<p>groups of people who came here, their motivations, struggles and contributions. In addition students must know about the great social movements, which have transformed this country, i.e., abolitionism, women’s suffrage, labor unions, civil rights for African Americans, and gay rights.</p> <p>The ongoing role of technology, science, art and religion in changing our society needs to be explored. This needs to be incorporated with an understanding of how our economy functions (or doesn’t). Related to this is the changing nature of media and the effect this has on all aspects of society.</p> <p>Students need to have a clear understanding of the benefits and limitations of our form of government. They need to learn that being a lifelong and informed citizen involves more than casting a ballot every 2 or 4 years. Unless there is active participation by many people our present form of government and way of life are at great risk.</p> <p>Teachers must spend less time on colonial and Revolutionary America and more on the last 150 years. This is the period of time which is most relevant to our present and future. Much more needs to be done to make the teaching of social studies an interactive process with students getting involved in projects, local communities and the issues of the day. Students need to be taught how to examine everything critically. This is crucial since there is more information, distortions, outright lies and propaganda available than ever before. Finally, the instruction of Social Studies should include an understanding of controversial and shameful topics such as the genocide of Native Americans, slavery of Africans, denial of rights for women, Blacks and gays. Only in this way will students have a true and accurate understanding of our society.</p>	
175	<p>I am writing in support of the recommendations of the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education. Over the past five years, I have been a regular observer of the activities of my local City government. Attendance by members of the community is typically low at City meetings and those that do attend when a specific issue of interest comes up are often unfamiliar with how the system works. I would like to see greater involvement of regular citizens in shaping the decisions that affect our communities and it seems to me that an important way to promote this is to start with a strong foundation in education. Please support the recommendations of the task force.</p>	<p>Tamara Brenner Citizen Advisory Council Member Citizen Advocacy Center Elmhurst</p>
176	<p>The plan delineated within the proposal to strengthen and extend Illinois Civic education to include participation in local elections and providing more resources to Civics teachers is comprehensive but may lack insights from students. Firstly, the plan’s background that good Civic education can act (1) “promote civic knowledge” is an agreeable insight since informed students are much more aware of their position and power as a voter.</p> <p>The second of achieving Civic equality is also feasible and logical and, in a colloquial way of speaking, a way to quiet the complaint of those that don’t even practice civics. Thus, it should reduce the feeling of class inequality by showing that society still hold <i>[sic]</i> the core idea of “one man, one vote” and thus the wealthy elite cannot silence the poorer masses. The idea of building more competent employees is slightly arguable since many employment</p>	<p>Student Senior Adlai E Stevenson High School</p>



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	<p>[sic] still remain quite homogeneous in forms of race and socio-economic background. Yet it is also true that the world is becoming more heterogeneous and connected so that a knowledge of the government and its functions is helpful in understanding economic trends and policies.</p> <p>The supposed causation in (4) improve school climate is not something I personally experience and stands [sic] contrast to my experiences at a child advocacy group downtown. In schools with an already unsafe level of gang violence, substance abuse, and behavioral problems, students and families are much more preoccupied with more realistic problems such as health care and the fulfilling of basic necessities. The argument that Civic programs leads to safer school is more linked to an atmosphere where one is offered the opportunity to contemplate the current political situation.</p> <p>Though the report does mention a flaw in (5) that dropout rate may not relate to Civic education, I hope to reemphasize the flaw in five. The supposed 81% of students that are uninterested by their classes and want more active studies are [sic] a strict opinion interpretation on the issue. Imagine someone completely uninterested with politics and are [sic] unpoliticized from an young age, does such a student fit with the potential dropout?</p> <p>Also please remember my opinion of four that only within a safe environment could fact number five be even considered. The seven recommendations within the proposal are vague but are acceptable in terms of general application. The one slightly deviating from the rest could be recommendation four that wishes to promote the certification of Teachers of Civics. As a high-achieving student attending a prestigious public high school, a teacher's competence from a personal standpoint has always been linked to the correspondence between their college major and class taught. The idea that a simple certificate may signify competence in Civic education is somewhat skewed especially when considering that Civics and news education itself is always a transient process. Therefore, please revise the certificate to more linkage between major and class taught is my personal opinion. Thank you for your time.</p>	
177	<p>I am part of a team of teachers who have built one of the most civically engaged high school in Illinois. Since 2000, our student voter registrars have registered more than 7,500 of their peers to vote. We have had nearly 700 students serve as election judges. Our students have volunteered thousands of hours of service to candidates of both parties. We have more students take the AP American Government test than any school in the country. And we changed the law in Illinois so that 17-year-olds can nominate candidates in primary elections if eligible to vote for the winner in the General Election.</p> <p>The fact is that we wouldn't have had a fraction of this success in civic engagement without American Government being a 1 semester required course in our school district. Participation in all of the above activities was done on a voluntary basis. There was no mandate. Our teachers often incentivize these types of political service opportunities with assignments that assess student understanding of critical political science concepts (like political efficacy) by</p>	<p>Andrew Conneen Teacher Adlai E. Stevenson High School Lincolnshire</p>



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	<p>using these types of service opportunities as examples. These service learning opportunities have proved to be quite successful at making our civics courses more than a class. Civic engagement becomes a lifestyle.</p> <p>But Stevenson High School is a rare exception in requiring graduating students to earn a credit in an American Government course. I would ask that you consider mandating that all Illinois students take at least one civics course before graduating so that we can heighten the discussion and the competition that is necessary to maintain a healthy republic with an educated citizenry.</p> <p>Stevenson is situated in the most competitive congressional district in the country with the incumbent representatives losing in consecutive elections—an extreme rarity these days. I’d like to think that the civic engagement of our students has now become such a vibrant part of our community that it contributes to an electorate that expects true competition between quality candidates seeking higher office.</p> <p>We encourage you to explore the possibility of mandating a civics requirement in every public school in the state as a way to teach our students the skills needed to participate in our democratic institutions.</p>	
178	<p><b>TO:</b> The Honorable John J. Cullerton, Senate President The Honorable Christine Radogno, Senate Majority Leader The Honorable Michael J. Madigan, Speaker of the House The Honorable Jim Durkin, House Minority Leader</p> <p><b>cc:</b> The Honorable Pat Quinn, Governor Tim Mapes, Clerk of the House Tim Anderson, Secretary Senate Legislative Research Unit</p> <p><b>RE: TESTIMONY—I SUPPORT REQUIRING CIVICS LITERACY AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ILLINOIS STUDENTS</b></p> <p><b>FROM:</b> Elisabeth Solomon Founder/Director Information Action Center</p> <p><b>DATE:</b> November 7, 2014</p> <p>I want to share three examples that inspired me to engage civically (based on sensibilities undergirded and nurtured by my 96-year-old mother who remains outspoken about the ravages of racism, sexism, ageism, ableism and classism).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Junior year in high school, 1968 I participated with a small group of “white and black” students who followed all of the school’s instructions to establish a “club” whose purpose was to explore race-related issues and their historic roots. The principal opposed and prohibited our first planned event, a dialogue session, open to the entire student body, facilitated by the president of Peoria’s action-oriented branch of the NAACP. We as students felt powerless after meeting and making no headway with the principal who refused to allow “that radical” on school property to address the student body. Two years later as a first-year college student at a public Illinois university, that same NAACP president addressed my Black Studies class where I was inspired to volunteer at the NAACP full time during the summer of 1970. That is where I learned the value of engaging civically—by taking community residents to register to vote and going door-to-door to encourage residents to</li> </ol>	<p>Elisabeth Solomon Founder/Director Information Action Center</p>

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	<p>attend and make formal public comments at city council and school board meetings about injustices. That rich, yet unpaid, tone-setting opportunity for a 19-year-old turned into a paid organizing position and opened the door to many years of right-livelihood opportunities to learn, earn and contribute.</p> <p>2. Thirty-five years later (2005) as the new public policy director for this country’s national premier workers’ rights nonprofit based in Chicago, Illinois (Interfaith Worker Justice), my first task was to develop a guide to help members of religious congregations convene effective meetings, with their elected representatives in Congress, to discuss raising the minimum wage. I had no idea about the general public’s low-level knowledge about the legislative process including who represents them in Congress. During the editing process for the “how-to” guide I was told to inform readers that every citizen has two Senators in the U.S. Congress. When I balked at using such an overly simplistic, elementary statement to which college-educated congregants might take offense, IWJ’s woman founder/executive director explained, “Quite frankly, too many of these citizens do not know they have two US Senators so you have to tell them!”</p> <p>3. As my senior-citizen years approached I recognized the disparate impact on African Americans of multiple life-quality indicators, including disenfranchisement and the contributing role played by policies and practices steeped in structural, racial economic injustice. So, I founded the nonprofit organization, Information Action Center (IAC). Its mission is to empower people to hold government to its promises, and by exposing when government defaults on those promises, to wield transparency as a catalyst for corrective action, furthering justice and democracy. IAC carries out its mission by promoting interest in and support for assuring that low-income people are able to assert their rights and be treated with dignity. IAC, a yet unfunded organization focuses on the needs of elderly persons, children and youth, and other low-income people who might otherwise be deprived of their rights by custom or prevailing practice.</p> <p>During the past few years I’ve had numerous opportunities through IAC to learn about how various Illinois local and state government programs function—on paper and in reality. Assisting people to access various programs and services for which they are eligible, or navigating and mediating often requires obtaining little-known information about government agencies and programs—not readily accessible to the general public—information without which people’s rights cannot easily be upheld.</p> <p>I support civic literacy and capacity building education for Illinois youth, including but not limited to, service-learning projects for middle- and high-school students. And, best-practice civic education would help students engage in critical thinking while learning how to work in concert with others for societal betterment. Students inspired by early, substantive, grade-appropriate (K–12) civic-education would be better prepared to fulfill their role as public citizens by learning how to engage in difference-making efforts. Best-practice civics courses, service-learning projects and learning assessments are excellent ways to spark students’ early and ongoing interest in real-world matters while empowering people with valuable life-skills with which to fully participate—traversing and transforming their world.</p>	

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179	I teach Family and Consumer Science and incorporate civic learning for every year I teach (6th, 7th, and 8th grade). I do not believe it should be only satisfied in the social studies area. I also do not believe it should be a requirement to graduate.	Julia Murray Teacher Family and Consumer Science Gower Middle School
180	<p>T.S. Eliot was not describing today's high school student but he might have when he said, "We had the experience but missed the meaning." What are our schools for? When we pay our property tax bills what do we expect to receive from our local schools? My hunch is that our neighbors care little about ACT scores. What we do care about, however, is whether or not our schools produce good neighbors. Isn't that what civics education is all about? James Madison said it best, "The very success of democracy depends upon the knowledge and skills of its citizens." His charge should be at the core of every school curriculum. Sadly it is not. Civics education may be the only reform measure that receives overwhelming support in the neighborhoods. It makes common sense. We can debate Common Core, evidence based learning, one-to-one learning and the like but who debates whether or not we want to graduate "good citizens"?</p> <p>If good citizenship is what we want we must be willing to teach it. And unless the state of Illinois makes this absolutely clear school districts, as we have seen, will focus their attention on other agendas with far less community buy in. Our neighbors have bought in through their tax dollars. It is about time that we return the dividend they want most—good citizens. Encouraging more civics education in Illinois is not just another good idea. It needs to be a priority.</p>	Daniel P. Larsen Teacher Civics Adlai E. Stevenson High School Lincolnshire
181	<p>I'm writing to urge you and members of the Illinois Task Force for Civic Education to consider the scope of the proposed civics course. I support a required civics course for high school education and I would ask you to consider expanding that requirement to include students at the middle school or Junior High level as well. I would also ask you to implement a civics service requirement for both middle school and high school students.</p> <p>As the director of the Our American Voice civic engagement program, I have had the opportunity to work with students and educators from across the state of Illinois through a program that encourages civic engagement but also teaches the principles that support that civic engagement. It is unfortunate that many citizens in Illinois think voting constitutes the whole of civic engagement and their understandings of the rights and freedoms, that are the foundation of this this country, are minimally explained as a precursor to the completion of the mandated US and Illinois constitution tests. As a result, our citizens are not prepared to contribute fully as engaged citizens.</p> <p>I point this out because I graduated from the Illinois public school system and, much like current students; I was given a cursory overview of both our constitution and the principles of active citizenship. I can understand why the</p>	Mara P. Grujanac Director of Civic Engagement Our American Voice Lincolnshire

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	<p>voting public [<i>sic</i>] lackadaisical about voting or turn a deaf ear to political discourse. We were never taught how to engage in this type of discussion or how to become involved in our communities. As a consequence, many of my peers do not understand how to become engaged. You have a chance to change this by providing a course that educates our students in the field of civics providing a foundation for their engagement in our democracy.</p> <p>I am asking you to adopt a statewide program in civics and civic engagement. Our youngest voters can make their voices heard at 17 years old. Please adopt a program that enables these students to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens <i>before</i> our youngest voters stand at the voting booth. Let them practice civic engagement and collaboration from a young age in order to ensure we are educating the kinds of citizens who will lead the next generation. Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments.</p>	
182	<p>The directors of the Barat Education Foundation support the work and endorse fully the agenda advanced by the Illinois Task Force as a starting point for restoring civic education to its proper place in the curriculum and educational experience for students in grades K–12 in the State of Illinois. We support this very important initiative for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In this country, we are at an interesting crossroads. Citizenship has never been more essential for shaping the future of our country. Yet, we are doing less today to prepare students to be good citizens than in the past. We need more funding and emphasis on civic education in the State of Illinois. We are not doing enough to empower and enable students to understand the critical role that citizens play in a democratic society as they work together to solve specific issues within their own communities.</li> <li>2. As the educational landscape has readjusted first with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and now with the new common core standards, civic education in the United States, and Illinois in particular, is reaching a crisis point. Currently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A mere nine states require students to pass a social studies test to graduate from high school.</li> <li>• Only eight states test on civics/government specifically. Only two require passing the test to graduate.</li> <li>• 21 states assess social studies versus 34 before NCLB.</li> <li>• What is taught and tested in schools is primarily: the U.S. Constitution, American heroes and the “virtues” of the American system of democracy.</li> <li>• The National Center for Educational Progress (NAEP) conducts a national benchmark test in civics every three years. When the 2010 test was administered only 25% of students at the 4th, 8th and 12th grade were “proficient” in civics.</li> <li>• The NAEP test revealed that fewer than half of American eighth graders knew the purpose of the Bill of Rights on the most recent national civics examination, and only one in ten students at the eighth grade level demonstrated acceptable knowledge of the checks and balances among the legislative, executive and judicial branches.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>The Barat Education Foundation Board of Directors</p> <p>Sheila A. Smith, Chair</p> <p>Kathleen Gillespie, Vice Chair</p> <p>Michael Dimengo, Treasurer</p> <p>Sarah Highstone, Secretary</p> <p>Sally Furay, Director</p> <p>Maureen Ryan, Director</p> <p>Mara Grujanac, Director</p>

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	<p>The evidence is overwhelming. No Child Left Behind and common core unintentionally led to All Young Citizens Left Behind. This is a serious problem.</p> <p>3. The growing gap in civic education is especially problematic for youth from socially and economic disadvantaged groups. Research has shown they suffer from a “civic achievement gap.” We need to do much better and much more in the arena of civics for those youth and for all of the nation’s youth. To accomplish this, we need an expanded and enhanced approach to civics. We need to move from a focus on “civic education” alone to focus on “civic competencies and engagement.” This will build the character and competencies required for youth to be 21st century citizens capable of bringing about positive change in schools, neighborhoods and communities.</p> <p>4. We need to better address civic education for our young people, starting in middle school. Middle-school students have the cognitive ability to grasp complex concepts and develop problem-solving skills, and are receptive to learning to be peer and civic leaders. By high school, students have typically chosen their paths already; middle school represents a critical window of time in which to prepare engaged and responsible lifelong citizens. This committee should be looking to fund schools, organizations and activities that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the development of skills and positive attitudes in addition to knowledge acquisition.</li> <li>• Provide the experiential opportunities necessary for building critical thinking and problem-solving skills.</li> <li>• Enable teachers and facilitators who have limited knowledge of history and the core values of our democracy to deliver civic education effectively.</li> <li>• Employ a strong website and 21st century technology oriented to the learning styles of today’s youth.</li> <li>• Focus on 21st century citizenship capabilities.</li> </ul> <p>5. The future of our democracy hinges on our youth—our future citizens. Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel Laureate in Economics once said:</p> <p><i>“The United States is a performance-oriented society, we strive to do well but what we do is affected by what we measure. If students are tested on reading, teachers will appropriately teach reading—but will spend less time developing broader cognitive skills.</i></p> <p><i>We have an opportunity to incorporate cognitive skills in the school learning experience through civics and citizenship. If we fail to do so, our sense of community will be further eroded and even the efficiency of our economy will be impaired.”</i></p> <p>We believe that we can and must do better in equipping those citizens. We believe it is vitally important that our students be exposed to civic responsibility, civil discourse, and critical thinking. That is why we implore you to effectively address these issues and to prepare tomorrows [sic] citizens today.</p>	

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183	<p>I write today in support of the recommendations made to the Illinois State Board of Education by the Illinois Civic Education Task Force. All of the recommendations (1–7) are sensible and based on the best practices for civic education. If enacted, they will all contribute to better civic education in Illinois—and hopefully a more engaged and civically active populace in Illinois—and beyond. In particular, the requirement for a standalone civics course would help ensure that no one graduates from high school without at least a rudimentary understanding [<i>sic</i>] civic responsibilities. In addition, the recommendation for service learning tied to the curriculum will provide students with opportunities for authentic educational activities that will allow them to put knowledge into practice in engaging ways. Research [<i>sic</i>] that these types of activities—across the curriculum—improve student learning. As the executive director of the Chicago Metro History Education Center (CMHEC), I can say that such authentic approaches to education certainly create educational benefits in the study of history. One of the most important parts of CMHEC’s mission is to prepare students for civic life, which it achieves by encouraging students to complete original research projects on topics related to Chicago history. These activities get students into their communities, encourage them learn the history of their communities, and help them develop 21st century skills for research, analysis, and presentation. Indeed, a deep understanding of history is key to the formation of advanced citizenship skills, and advanced citizenship is not really possible with the knowledge and skills that people develop through the study of history, including—but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An understanding of the history of American forms of government and civic institutions.</li> <li>• A knowledge of the participation of Americans from diverse communities (without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, etc.) in American government and history.</li> <li>• An understanding of the place and role of American communities within the broader context of world history and global cultures.</li> <li>• And, historical thinking and research skills that help citizens understand cause-and-effect and change over time, distinguish fact from opinion, weigh evidence, and apply a whole host of other skills that are essential for citizens to identify and solve the problems that face our communities.</li> </ul> <p>It is almost axiomatic. One cannot be a good American citizen without a good understanding of American history. One cannot be a good citizen of the world without sufficient knowledge of world history and cultures. The recommendations to ISBE that the Task Force has submitted explicitly and implicitly rely on the importance of studying history to prepare students for civic life, and I wholeheartedly support the recommendations, particularly those that help to foster that connection.</p> <p>If there is one area in which I would like the recommendations to go farther, it would be in bolstering the component to support the development of strong critical thinking and research skills. New technologies are making it possible for people to find unprecedented amounts of information about a nearly limitless number of topics. The</p>	<p>Frank Valadez Executive Director Chicago Metro History Education Center Chicago</p>



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	ability of people to confidently and knowledgeably use that information, critically assess and analyze it, and apply it to major civic questions is an important capacity for all citizens to have. I hope—as these recommendations move forward—that a focus on these skills will also be a more explicit part of the implementation process. Thank you for your time and consideration! And congratulations to the Task Force for its wonderful work.	
184	<p>I am writing to express my views in regard to adding an additional civics requirement. I am opposed to adding this requirement. As a father of two sons who were both interested in advanced education and careers in agriculture, it became difficult to manage both the requirements to graduate from high school and their real interests in agricultural education. While I understand the importance of additional civics education, I believe the content of this area could be addressed through existing course requirements offered in high school or through student organizations. For this reason, I am opposed to adding this additional requirement.</p> <p>Both of my sons learned about civics and working in and with their communities for the betterment of society through their work in the FFA. However, all through high school they were pressured to either be a college bound student or vocational student. Please do not add this additional requirement. I believe more students would remain in school if it meets their interests and career goals. What are my sons doing now. My oldest is a large animal veterinarian who needed to understand animal science and maintain high academic standards to be accepted to Vet School. Our youngest is now working on Master’s Degree in Education and has travelled Illinois, China and South Africa because of his involvement in FFA.</p>	<p>Al Zwilling Educator Parent Sherrard</p>
185	<p>My name is Gail Mangrum and I am a retired twenty-year veteran Detective of the Chicago Police Department as well as a recently retired Chicago Public School Teacher. I would like to thank the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education for allowing public discourse on such an important issue as Civic education. I fully support the Task Force’s recommendations for Civic education including: a civics course requirement, the revision of Illinois’s Social Studies Standards, a project-based service learning requirement, educator professional development, and student involvement in elections.</p> <p>My experience as a Detective and High School Social Studies teacher has provided me with a unique prospective [<i>sic</i>] on the importance of civic understanding and engagement. As a Detective dealing primarily with juvenile offenders I realized that the lack of understanding of civic responsibility strongly contributed to a disregard for the rule of law. In many cases, young offenders had limited awareness and exposure to standards of good citizenry. Implementing civic course requirements at the elementary and high school level would serve to help mitigate that circumstance.</p> <p>As an inner city High School Social Studies teacher, I know that students would benefit immensely from required civic education and engagement curriculum. I agree with the findings in the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education report that responsible citizens are individuals who are informed and thoughtful, willing participants in their communities, politically active and hold strong moral and civic virtues.</p>	<p>Gail Mangrum Former Teacher, Social Studies Retired Chicago Police Detective</p>



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	I strongly support the implementation of the recommendations stated in my testimony. These vitally important measures will greatly improve the level of social, moral, and political capabilities of future citizens of the great state of Illinois. I would like to thank the Task Force for your time and consideration.	
186	<p><b>I find the lack of specific data regarding the current level of student participation in Items #3 and #4 particularly disturbing and challenges the validity of all recommendations that will limit student opportunity and choice. The report indicates that “81% of high school dropouts said they would have been less likely to do so if there were more opportunities for experiential learning” but fails to provide any data on courses or organizations that have successfully integrated Civics learning activities in their curricula/program of work.</b></p> <p><b>I would invite the members of this committee or others to review just one of the program [sic] offered though Agricultural Education, the American Heritage Award. Use <a href="#">this link</a> to access a copy of this program and see how many of these recommendations are already being addressed through team teaching, community partnerships and hands-on learning activities.</b></p> <p><b>Opposition to recommendation # 1: Civics Course Requirement.</b> The addition of a Civics class that would be required for graduation is not in the best interest of Illinois students—unless another class required for graduation were deleted from the students’ crowded schedules. Students should have an opportunity to sample, explore and narrow their career path interests while in Junior High and High School. The continual addition of required classes denies students the opportunity [sic] explore career options through valuable career and college preparation courses that are offered through Career &amp; Technical Education programs.</p> <p><b>Opposition to recommendation # 3: Project-Based/Service Learning Requirement.</b> There are already alternative means to encourage students to become actively involved in community service. Many classes and student organizations already include a community service component or some type of service based learning activity. A single class experience requiring a student to work at a project is not going to change their heart, mind or attitude towards community service. Student organizations such as FFA, National Honor Society, FCCLA , etc. have incorporated community service as part of their mission and provide students multiple community service experiences throughout the school year. The constant opportunity for hands-on service learning is far more realistic and successful approach. Let’s use the tools we already have in place.</p> <p><b>Opposition to recommendation # 6: Student Involvement in Elections.</b> While student understanding of the voting (and electoral process) is important, this in itself is not cause to add a 3rd year of Social Sciences. If information about the electoral process, suffrage movement, and historic issues we have faced to insure [sic] all citizens the right to vote, then all our current social sciences need to have their content examined and be retooled to make certain the rights of citizenship are incorporated. Again, there are already means to accomplish Student Involvement in Elections—ranging from mock elections at the schools, having teachers nominate students to serve</p>	James Craft Illinois FFA Center Springfield

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	as election judges, encouraging student to attend hearings and campaign events. Many organization [ <i>sic</i> ] (such as those mentioned previously) are already actively involved in the election process or have the opportunity to do so.	
187	My name is Riley and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
188	My name is Diya as I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be a Democracy School with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
189	My name is CJ and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
190	My name is Sarah and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School, we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of	Student, Carmel Catholic High School

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	effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home, so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools, we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	
191	My name is Jack and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a democracy school we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/ government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our community. This knowledge will help us be effective citizens for the rest of our life. Citizenship doesn't start at home and having government taught in school will help the future generations out greatly.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
192	My name is Addie and I'm a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School, we support civic education and service learning. The schools of Illinois should all be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and activities of effective citizenship are skills for life. Informed, engaged, and responsible citizens are essential to the success of a representative democracy. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
193	My name is Mary Beth and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. I believe all schools in Illinois should be a democracy school that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, including a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across curriculum and extra-curricular activities. It is important to learn the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship because these are skills for life. The success of representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens, which does not always begin at home. For these reasons, please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
194	My name is Italy and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed,	Student, Carmel Catholic High School

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	engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the task force.	
195	Hi my name is Ryan and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy Schools [sic] with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our profession, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools, we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendation of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
196	My name is Garrett and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a democracy school we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be democracy schools with a school culture that respects and promote [sic] student voice and service learning, includes a civic/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our profession, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities and all have a voice in politics. We should all have some idea of what's going on.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
197	My name is Katherine and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and a nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
198	My name is Maddy and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School, we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School

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199	My name is Ben and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/governmental course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
200	<p>My name is Caroline and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. As citizens, high school students should be informed about their government; however, without a required civics/government course, students may not get the opportunity to spend time learning about the government. This year, I am enrolled in a government course. At the beginning of the semester we took a quiz about how informed we are as citizen <i>[sic]</i>. I was surprised by how little I actually knew about the government. After the past few months, I feel more informed and confident talking about politics. In order to have responsible citizens—and voters—in Illinois, we should require a civics/government course for all students.</p> <p>All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure.</p>	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
201	My name is Shea and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life, The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools, we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
202	My name is Morgan and I am a member of the graduating class of 2015 at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, including a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School

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	All of us, regardless of our profession, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	
203	My name is Austin and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
204	My name is Cassie and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School, we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home, so if we do not take the lead from Democracy Schools, we are a state and nation at risk of failure.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
205	My name is Adam and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and set use [sic] learning, includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure, please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force.	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
206	Illinois has a strong track record of empowering young people to take part in the democratic process. We have implemented 17-year-old voter registration, online registration and have had thousands of high school students	David Orr Cook County Clerk



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	<p>serve as poll workers on Election Day. There are also local groups like Mikva Challenge, the League of Women Voters and the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago who excel at helping local students find their civic voice. As the chief election official for Cook County, I strongly believe that we should continue to take an “All In” approach when it comes to registering our young people and finding ways to make our democracy more accessible.</p> <p><b>Pre-registration for 16-year-olds</b> would be the next big step in that all-in approach. When teenagers in Illinois go to get their driver’s licenses they should have the opportunity to pre-register to vote. This will ensure that when they become eligible to vote they will be placed on the voter rolls and will receive all the information they need to successfully cast a ballot. Organizations and election officials orchestrating registration campaigns can also widen their net when they go to high schools to ensure that students without driver’s licenses are included in the process. Pre-registration will allow Illinois to register more young people than ever before and remain a leader in civic engagement.</p>	Chicago
207	<p>My name is Claire and I am a student at Carmel Catholic High School. All schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a student culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning. This includes a civics/government course, and demonstrates civic engagement across curricular and extracurricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions are citizen and member [<i>sic</i>] of our communities. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. If we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendation of the Task Force.</p>	Student, Carmel Catholic High School
208	<p>I do not support the extra requirement for high school students to have a required civics class above what is currently taught at our high schools. I have been teaching agriculture classes and cooperative education classes for the past 30 years at Mt. Vernon Township High School. Our agriculture students do something almost every day with respect to the American flag, our constitution of the United States and political issues that happen in Illinois and the United States. We cannot take the hands on classes away from our students. They must have some electives available to them so that they will have a skill to get a job when they graduate high school. Our high schools need to have more Career and Technical Education classes for our students. We want to make all of our students test takers. We need to recognize that we need to make many of our students into workers before they leave high school.</p> <p>Currently, the Mt. Vernon High School schedule has just changed to an eight period day. Our students are so glad that they can now take classes like agriculture, medical classes, and business classes in the same year. O’Fallon High School only has a six period day. These students have a choice between art or music for their one elective. These poor students leave high school with high test scores, however they do not have hands on skills. These types of high schools also have a higher drop-out rate. Please don’t take our electives away from our students.</p>	John T. Kabat Teacher Agriculture Mt. Vernon High School



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209	<p>My name is Sharon Smogor and I am a teacher at Carmel Catholic High School. As a Democracy School we value and support civic education and service learning. ALL schools in Illinois should be Democracy Schools with a school culture that respects and promotes student voice and service learning, <b>includes a civics/government course</b>, and demonstrates civic engagement across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. All of us, regardless of our professions, we, the people, are citizens and members of our communities.</p> <p>The knowledge, skills and attitudes of effective citizenship are skills for life. The success of our representative democracy is dependent upon informed, engaged, and responsible citizens. Citizenship does not always begin at home so if we do not take the lead from the Democracy Schools we are a state and nation at risk of failure. Please adopt the recommendations of the Task Force, especially the civics/government and service learning requirements.</p>	<p>Sharon Smogor Teacher Carmel Catholic High School</p>
210	<p>As an educator, I very strongly urge you to reconsider your recommendations and to NOT implement a third year of civics education in Illinois high schools. From my study of the issue, there seem to be many reasons to vote AGAINST the recommendations rather than for the recommendations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Every school district in the state has stretched their budgets to be as efficient as possible. Adding another requirement will significantly add to the cost of operating a high school. Schools do not have the budgets to add Civics teachers without eliminating other required teachers.</li> <li>2. There is no specific evidence provided in the report that supports Items #3 and 4, and without evidence there is no reason to limit student choice or opportunity to take other coursework.</li> <li>3. No change has been proposed to the current requirement for civics education, so before we add additional requirements it would be wise to improve instruction in the current system.</li> <li>4. The report indicates that 81% of high school dropouts said they would have been less likely to do so if there were more opportunities for experiential learning... yet you are not recommending the addition of a requirement to take a CTE (Career &amp; Technical Education) course, which has Experiential Learning as a REQUIREMENT in every course.</li> <li>5. Requiring an additional Civics course would effectively eliminate most Career &amp; Technical Education programs in schools. These programs prepare students for life after school, no matter what age they enter the workforce. In a time when employers frequently tell school officials the students are not prepared to do basic math and reading comprehension IN CONTEXT it seems foolish to reduce the number of offerings to students in courses already designed to help students learn those skills!</li> </ol> <p>I would very much appreciate the opportunity to speak with any official who has questions or would like further feedback. I encourage the committee to study the Agriculture Education model of programs, where student dropout rate is lower, experiential learning is REQUIRED, and civics education is a component of all FFA instruction.</p>	<p>Luke Allen Employee, Champaign-Ford County Regional Office of Education Former High School Teacher Joliet</p>

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211	<p>We appreciate the opportunity to be heard on the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education Report, and we commend the work of Shawn Healy and the entire task force in focusing the state’s attention on this vital educational priority. The Student Press Law Center is a nonprofit advocacy organization founded in 1974 with the mission of promoting involvement in civic life through the vehicle of topical, truth-telling journalism in schools and colleges. The SPLC advocates for a sensible approach to the regulation of student speech that balances authority with autonomy, giving young people the “breathing space” to address issues of social and political concern without fear of punishment or retaliation. Many of the task force’s recommendations are excellent ones in need of no repeating. We write by way of supplementation and emphasis to point out some additional essential steps toward creating a civically healthy climate in Illinois schools.</p> <p><b>(1) Protect students’ rights to engage in speech on matters of public concern</b></p> <p>The task force recognizes that student participation in education policymaking is an essential ingredient in effective civic learning. Indeed, without a participatory role, it is unrealistic to expect that students will take the time to learn about the workings of government, just as it is unrealistic to expect that an Illinois voter will take the time to learn about the candidates and issues in a Florida school-board race. People do not expend their limited “eyeball time” to become knowledgeable about matters they are powerless to influence. Only by empowering students with a meaningful voice on the issues affecting their daily lives will we “move the needle” on civic participation. This must start by strengthening inadequate legal protections that embolden schools to shut down the discussion of social and political issues that they regard as excessively controversial or provocative.</p> <p>To give just one concrete example, in April 2013, high school journalists in a Chicago suburb ambitiously arranged an online chat during which members of the school community could interact with candidates in an impending school board election, giving students a rare opportunity to get their concerns directly heard. But the online chat was canceled by order of the district school superintendent, whose only justification to the students was that, quote, “too much could go wrong.” This is the type of “civic dis-engagement” that legalized censorship promotes in schools. It is illustrative of the many hundreds of school censorship cases reported each year to the legal hotline of the Student Press Law Center. In the vast majority of these cases, students are given no explanation at all for school censorship decisions other than the assertion that speech critical of school policies and programs “makes the school look bad.” Because of the lack of meaningful legal constraints on school censorship authority, students today are graduating from Illinois public schools having been trained that criticizing government policies makes you a bad citizen. It is difficult to think of a more counterproductive “civics lesson.”</p> <p>Seven states (California, Massachusetts, Oregon, Colorado, Kansas, Iowa, Arkansas) protect the editorial independence of student journalists by statute, and three other jurisdictions (Washington, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia) do so by state board of education administrative regulation. The combined experience of</p>	<p>Frank D. LoMonte Executive Director Students Press Law Center Arlington, Virginia</p>

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	<p>these ten jurisdictions with student editorial independence amounts to more than 170 years. In those combined 170 years, there is no evidence that any of the “horribles” predicted by opponents of student press freedom have materialized. Students are neither running amok publishing defamatory or shock-value material, nor are they dragging their principals into court over minor slights. These statutes have, if anything, <i>reduced</i> litigation by clarifying the boundary lines left indistinct by the Supreme Court’s ponderous ruling in the 1988 <i>Hazelwood</i> case. The <i>Hazelwood</i> standard, which gives schools broad censorship authority over student speech in “curricular” settings, has been widely discredited and, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary in 2013, was denounced as educationally indefensible by the largest national organizations representing <a href="#">professional journalists</a>, <a href="#">college journalism instructors</a>, and <a href="#">high school journalism educators</a>.</p> <p>As the Society of Professional Journalists declared in August 2013 by unanimous resolution, “it is well-documented the <i>Hazelwood</i> censorship clause impedes an educator’s ability to adequately instruct and train students in professional journalistic values and practices, including the right to question authority and investigate performances of governance.” Illinois protects the editorial independence of college journalists in the College Campus Press Act, enacted in June 2008, but the statute fails to protect journalists in K–12 schools who are the most vulnerable to school coercion. Effective civic education requires comprehensive legal protection for journalistic speech addressing social and political issues, including statutory protection for the journalism teachers who too often face retaliation for encouraging meaningful journalistic inquiry. Illinois should look as a model to the Kansas Student Publications Act, K.S.A. Sec. 72-1504, which provides thorough and effective protection, including insulating schools against legal liability for what their students publish, while preserving the ability of schools to intercede in the extreme event that journalistic speech threatens to incite violence or otherwise portends imminent harm.</p> <p><b>(2) Provide state support for participation in scholastic journalism</b></p> <p>Journalism is the single most effective vehicle for involving young people in the civic life of the community. Participation in journalism, whether as a writer or as a reader, is for most young people the first time they understand the workings of the government agencies with direct impact on their daily lives, including school boards, police, courts and legislatures. Student journalists attend school board meetings, interview political candidates, read court documents and otherwise actively grapple with the daily workings of government in a way that transcends the civics textbook—and they bring that knowledge back to the school community in a relatable way. The public is increasingly reliant on students to gather and report the news about issues of public concern. Because of rapid erosion in the ranks of mainstream professional journalists—a 2009 Brookings Institution study found that just 1.4 percent of mainstream media coverage is devoted to education, chiefly crisis coverage such as school shootings or disease outbreaks—student-produced media is often the community’s only source of information about school programs and policies.</p>	

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	<p>While student media still thrives [<i>sic</i>] in places, journalism faces eroding financial support due to a combination of general financial scarcity at all levels of government, increased emphasis on math and science education, competition for resources with standardized-testing preparation, and the censorship-motivated withdrawal of funding. All these factors have combined to make journalism an “endangered species” in many schools. Every Illinois high school should be <i>required</i> to provide a meaningful opportunity, whether as part of the school day or as part of a well-supported extracurricular program with the paid assistance of a well-trained adviser, for students who want to engage in newsgathering and publishing.</p> <p><b>(3) Incorporate media consumption and creation into the foundational civics course</b></p> <p>While it is an encouraging start that “news literacy” and “media literacy” are attaining widespread recognition as valuable elements of a well-rounded public education, they will continue to exist at the margins of the school day as an occasional “guest speaker drop-in” unless incorporated into a comprehensive basic civics course required of all graduates. “Civics education” means much more than studying the flow chart of “how a bill becomes a law.” It means learning how to gather, analyze, process and explain information—how to write a constituent letter or op-ed column or newsletter, or build an online voter guide, or conduct an online petition drive. Without these participatory civic skills, a civics curriculum will be just as effective as reading a book to learn how to drive a car, throw a curveball, or fix an engine. How to effectively consume news and how to effectively create news must be built into the core civics curriculum, and must include a participatory component (including, importantly, the online publishing “coding” skills that are directly translatable not only to civic participation but to business entrepreneurship). In the year 2014 when citizens are bombarded with online information of dubious reliability, no student should graduate without rigorous training in the fundamental citizenship skills of media consumption and creation, without which effective civic participation is impossible.</p> <p>We appreciate your consideration of these recommendations and eagerly offer the resources of the Student Press Law Center as you go forward toward putting the task force’s recommendations into action.</p>	
212	<p>Some of our next generation may not be able to vote, but it certainly has a voice. When we engage in the topics of the day, we can shape the decisions that are around us. These actions often have a greater impact on our future than that of our parents. It will soon be our time to become the leaders and innovators of the world, and we must do our job to be better off than our parents so our children can strive to accomplish the same. At Adlai E. Stevenson High School, an organized campaign by teenagers translated that voice into thousands of new voters. On March 18, 2014, seventeen year-olds who will turn 18 before the general election cast ballots in the political primaries for the very first time in the state of Illinois. Through petition collecting and meetings with legislators in the state capital, our interest in a hotly debated topic generated into direct action. Just one high school in one county in one corner of the state could influence all of Illinois. To curb the growing discrepancy between Millennials and previous</p>	<p>Student Adlai E. Stevenson High School Buffalo Grove Stevenson</p>

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	<p>American generations, curriculum in our schools should teach students how our government is run as well as how to be informed politically and civically. As a supplement to classroom education, service based projects should be introduced to provide Millennials firsthand experience in public service within their communities.</p> <p>Many Millennials may be old enough to vote, but according to The Washington Post, just about one-quarter of high-school seniors have a “proficient” level of civics knowledge and skills, the level that is required to have a grasp on what is going on in our country. Only one in twenty-five high school seniors have demonstrated a level of knowledge that would be considered politically aware. We need to redouble our efforts at improving our curriculum at home. Changes in the classroom should include providing lesson time to engage in discussions that relate to contemporary issues. Every high school senior should receive a diploma from a high school that incorporates elements of awareness and argumentation into each of their classes. Engaging students in an open classroom setting replicates the role that active citizens play in the community. This concept is called citizenship learning.</p> <p>The Citizenship Education Clearing House at the University of Missouri-Saint Louis created The Election Program (CECH) to integrate citizenship learning into the curriculum of local schools and to coordinate student based service projects that involve the participation of the community. It focused on the upcoming election, the bread-and-butter issues of the campaign, and how the election process works. After learning how their government and local nonprofit organizations operate, students engaged in small group discussions with representatives of their community . Students in the St. Louis metropolitan area became interested in topics that caused them to become informed. Perry and Associates, Inc., an education consulting company that works with improving the curriculum of public schools, highlights: “Students learn about their rights as individuals, and their responsibilities to the communities in which they live. Through the process of clarifying their rights and responsibilities, students form their own framework for citizenship.”</p> <p>The Miller Center, a public policy institute at the University of Virginia, notes that President John F. Kennedy observed at the height of the presidential campaign of 1960: “It seems to be that government service is the way to translate this interest into action, that the natural place for the concerned citizen is to contribute part of his life to the natural interest.” Public service is not just politics or the government process. It is involved in our lives any time when we feel a sense of concern for others. This act of being concerned allows individuals to make the decisions that affect their fellow citizens. At my high school, students wanted something to be accomplished. They learned the ins and outs of our voting laws, generated an interest in how to change them, and in turn allowed thousands of students across our state to vote. If we do not change the way the Millennial Generation thinks and acts, there is no question that the trajectory of the United States will be an unprecedented downward slope. If we do not modify our curriculum, another rising power halfway around the world will. If we do not support new service learning programs, we lose the chance to support what is being taught in the classroom. Public service helps to (1)</p>	

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	to sanctify a commitment to the greater good and (2) to secure our standing in the world. To promote it, we all need to use our voice.	
213	As a secondary teacher, I include social studies in my curriculum. I feel that teachers need to teach a well rounded education. My students get that well rounded education and not just what is included in the textbook. We relate what is happening in the world to the career nursing or medical terminology. I want my students to be contributing community members and well rounded to pursue a career of their choosing. Please do not limit the education the high school students get by adding an additional course in social studies. Let us instead focus on rounding out the education of all subjects taught by teachers in all disciplines. Thank you.	Ruth Ann Rodino Medical Terminology and Orientation to Health Occupations Instructor Livingston Area Career Center Pontiac
214	<p>I am writing on behalf of the Illinois Political Science Association (IPSA) to fully endorse the recommendations made by the Illinois Task Force on Civic Education (Task Force) in their May 2014 report.</p> <p>Civic education is essential to sustain our constitutional democracies at the federal and state levels. There is no more important task than the development of a responsible citizenry, for without a citizenry committed to the fundamental values and principles of democracy a government of the people cannot function. Knowledge of the functions of government is a start, but it is important that people also know how to be a part of government and governance and realize that these concepts entail much more than the mechanical processes of the institutions of government.</p> <p>Civic education is highly correlated with civic engagement outside the classroom. According to the Center for Information Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, in the 2010 federal elections only 24 percent of 18–29 year olds in Illinois voted. Unfortunately, that level of participation is the highest for any midterm election since 1990, and the rate of participation steadily declined from 1982 (40.3 percent) to 2006 (23.1 percent). Even more troubling is the decline in the registration rate for 18–29 year olds in the state, which was at 58.6 percent in 1982 but only 48.1 percent in 2010. Not only are fewer young people participating in democracy, fewer young people are expressing any interest in participating.</p> <p>Importantly, voting is only one aspect of civic engagement, and a 2011 survey by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute found that a college degree fails to promote civic engagement beyond voting. Indeed, the Institute found that greater civic knowledge—not a college degree—was the leading factor in encouraging active civic engagement in adulthood. It is thus imperative that students attain their civic knowledge while they are young, because this lack of knowledge is not something for which a college education can compensate.</p>	Naser L. Javaid President, Illinois Political Science Association Assistant Professor of Political Science, Roosevelt University



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	<p>Civic education and engagement not only help the quality of democracy, they also help individuals. Numerous studies have found that civic learning has a positive impact on student development, including promoting the development of problem analysis and critical thinking skills, skills that are essential for student success both inside and outside the classroom. IPSA agrees with the Task Force that civics should be a required class in high school, that social studies teachers should be certified and given continuing education, and that service learning will lay the groundwork for civic engagement programs in college. As an organization we are working at the college and university level to insure <i>[sic]</i> more students are taught civic engagement there as well, but to be effective some groundwork must be laid in middle school and high school.</p> <p>Thomas Jefferson said, “Every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone. The people themselves, therefore, are its only safe depositories. And to render even them safe, their minds must be improved to a certain degree.” IPSA firmly believes that civic education is a pillar of the mental improvement to which Jefferson was referring, and we fully endorse the recommendations made by the Task Force which we believe are vital to the attainment of that improvement.</p>	
215	<p>Dear Shawn: I passed out the material from your last email on the possibility of sending emails in support of the Task Force report to the Illinois Political Science Association at its meeting on November 8<sup>th</sup> even though it was a day after the deadline. I am hoping that at least a couple of political science faculty will do so. In addition, the association unanimously adopted a resolution in support of the report. Its new president, Professor Javid of Roosevelt University will send an email to the official site and notify you by email officially early this week. I hope this will provide additional useful support for the excellent set of proposals by the task force. Let me know if there is anything else that I and IPSA can do.</p>	Dick Simpson, Illinois Political Science Association
216	<p>This is written as a businessperson and citizen education in Illinois who has clients in the United States, Europe and UK. I am often asked by my clients and colleagues abroad what is going on with your country and the lack of civic engagement throughout the United States.</p> <p>American and Illinois are suffering greatly from an education system that stresses STEM but does little to nothing to develop the fundamental knowledge and skills required for informed citizenship. I often hear about what we are educating our students to be global citizens—well citizenship starts at home and we are suffering the consequences of decades of little or no civic education in our schools. This state and our country has moved forward because of the engagement of our citizens from all areas including business, political, government, education, religious and not for profit organizations, but when only 37% of our electorate participate and less than 13% of voters 30 and under, we have a problem and it is not getting better, it is getting worse.</p> <p>For this reason, I ask you to endorse fully the agenda advance by the Illinois Task Force as a starting point for restoring civic education to its proper place in the curriculum for students in grades K–12 in the state of Illinois.</p>	Lawrence A. Goldman, Certified Public Accountant Computer Accounting and Financial Services, Inc.



Public Input Received From the Period of November 1–7, 2014		
	Comments	Name and Role
217	<p>I am a long time community advocate and am currently a trustee in the village of Maywood. I believe that it is important to update civic education to reflect the current changes in our voting structure. Allowing 17 year olds, who turned 18 by the November 4 election to cast a ballot in the spring primary, makes good sense.</p> <p>As a recent NBC 5 report indicated, since the beginning of the year, the county clerk reached out to all 89 high schools in suburban Cook County to actively educate and register new voters affected by the law, which resulted in 5, 439 new voters registering to vote, of which 3,423 [sic] 17-years eligible had an opportunity to vote in 2014. The remaining 2,006 were new voters whom were 18 years of age. This outreach effort results in Orr’s office training student deputy registrars. Orr’s office also conducted a video contest and organized “Democracy Week,” to help spread the word about the new law. “The enthusiasm displayed by students, teachers and deputy registrar organizations was phenomenal,” Orr said in a statements. “A habit of lifelong voting is born early,” so the hope is that these teenagers will vote in the March 18 primary and every election that follows thereafter. What is crucial to this new voter is the he/she is better prepared to make intelligent decisions concerning the electoral process, but this will only come if there are better prepared for this new responsibility.</p> <p>During election season, millions are spent promoting candidates; few dollars are spent to educate voters on the importance of being better informed. Not by campaign ads and broken promises, but of the significance of knowing why it is important to vote and how your vote can have such a great impact on the local government that has the greatest impact on our lives—local government. Providing this additional civic education training to juniors/seniors in high school who are at the minimum age requirement will hopefully not only help them better understand the process, but more importantly understand how their vote can have an impact on the quality of life for not just themselves but for their families as well. Being in a position to vote because of this new law, if they are not better informed, many will either vote the way their parents vote and/or select a candidate by a name that sounds familiar or the trickery of campaign ads.</p> <p>Citizen’s Advocacy Center is one of the few in Illinois, if not the only civic organization that has been offering this form of education for a number of years, and I strongly urge you to give support to it and offer it across the state as a means for helping make voters more informed of the political educational process. I support the civic education task force recommendations, including a stand-alone civic education class because it can help wake up a group of uninformed voters better understand the rights afforded them.</p>	<p>Cheryl A. Ealey-Cross Trustee, Village of Maywood</p>