

Summary

Issue: **HF 562** – adequately preparing students to fully participate in the political process; requiring a credit-bearing civics course in 11th or 12th grade

LWV Minnesota: **Supports**

Civics education is key to the purpose and mission of the League of Women Voters. Members believe democracy depends on informed citizens actively and effectively participating in their government.

Civics education is critical to strengthening American democracy

- The **Founding Fathers** saw education as the way to safeguard America’s system of self-governance and help voters choose leaders wisely. They didn’t want citizens to fall prey to demagogues, a problem endemic to democracy.
- The **National Council for the Social Studies** believes **public schools must prepare** competent, responsible, informed, and thoughtful **citizens who participate in their communities, act politically, and are concerned with moral and civic virtues.**
- **Improving civics education should have nonpartisan support across the political spectrum;** strengthening American democracy is an interest we should all share in common.

A long-standing tension exists in schools between educating students to be skilled workers and responsible citizens; both goals are important and must work in tandem

- **School culture appears weighted toward STEM** at the expense of civics education.ⁱ
- **In 2014, only 23 percent of students achieved a score of proficient or above on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) civics test.**ⁱⁱ There was no significant change in the 2018 average NAEP civics score for eighth-grade students compared to 2014.
- The **College Board** believes **students must master computer science AND the US Constitution to succeed** in life. “To be a strong citizen you need to know how the structures of our government work and how to operate within them.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Civic literacy is key to transforming knowledge into practice

- **Civics education must emphasize the importance of project-based learning** and foster a culture of civic engagement and community problem solving.^{iv}
- **Civics is NOT synonymous with history. Civics gives students the ability to apply** the knowledge and skill sets they learn in **history.**^v A high-quality civics education offers students opportunities to **engage in** model **democratic processes, participate in** the **civic life** of their communities, and **learn from their experiences** as a part of their formal civics coursework.^{vi}



The League of Women Voters Minnesota urges members to vote **in favor** of HF562

About LWV

The League of Women Voters is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public. We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

ⁱ Civics education in Six Public High Schools in the White Bear Lake Area, Report of the League of Women Voters White Bear Lake Area, February 2, 2018.

ⁱⁱ The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment measuring what students know and can do in various academic subject areas. Students' NAEP civics test scores have increased one percent in proficiency since 1998.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stephanie Sanford, College Board Chief of Global Policy, *The Two Codes Your Kids Need to Know*, Thomas Friedman, New York Times, February 12, 2019.

^{iv} The State of Civics Education, Center for American Progress Report, February 21, 2018.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2018/07/23/what-does-civics-education-look-like-in-america/> Jul 23, 2018