

## VOTER EDUCATION: HIGH SCHOOL CIVICS CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

There's a perception that much has been lost academically in the Civics and Political institutions realm in recent years. Some states note improved Overall academic performance (short-and long-term) with Civics, service learning and the like in a curriculum.

The Education Commission of the States conducted a national survey of school requirements in December, 2016. Our neighboring four states provide a baseline of comparisons and alternative paths.

### **Four neighboring States' Survey Responses**

#### IDAHO

Five credits required including Government (2 credits), U.S. History (2 credits) and Economics (1 credit). Current World Affairs and Geography will reintegrate into all social studies instruction. Courses such as geography, sociology, world affairs, and world history maybe offered as electives, not to be counted as social studies requirements (IADAPA 08.02.03.105)

#### NORTH DAKOTA

Three units of social studies, including: a. one unit of United States history; b. one-half unit of United States Government and one-half unit of economics; or (2) one unit of problems of democracy: and c. one unit or two one-half units of any other social studies, which may include Civic Civilization, geography and history, Multi-cultural Studies, North Dakota Studies, psychology, Sociology and World History.(NDCC 15.1-21-02.2)

#### SOUTH DAKOTA

Three units or more of social studies includes a minimum of the following: (a) one unit of US history. (b) One-half unit of US government; (c) One-half unit of geography, and (d) one-half unit of world history. (ARSD 24:43:11:02)

#### WYOMING

Graduation requirements include 3 school years of social study including history, American government and economic systems and Institutions (Wyo. Stat. §21-2-304 and WCWR 005-000-031§9.b)

### **OUR STATE**

Per the same survey, Montana is one of only 11 states not requiring courses in civics or American Government per-se. Civics seems to be "covered" (perhaps embedded?) by two units chosen within a social studies "cluster" including Geography, History and Economics. (MAR 10.55.905)

Big question: is this because of our rural nature or something else again. (Pehraps a newer STEM thrust?)

These need not equate to democracy education NOT occurring. Further context can be gained from pending OPI survey questions, results. To be sure, engagement of many stakeholders needs to be accommodated at critical junctures.

### **Benefits/Outcomes of OUR Mission**

Desired outcomes are led by continuing the growth in at Election Turnouts for 18 – 30 year-olds by enhancing students' ability to apply civic virtues and processes.

Some additional thoughts/facilitation for our Committee's initial deliberations:

- Arrive at some working definitions of "civics" and/or "government" coursework?
- Decide on restricting to high school — or expand to K-12?
- Are there local variations or electives being offered but not reflected in statewide social studies standards?
- Might our mission be better pointed at non-didactic exercises that complement/supplement active teaching?
- Didn't OPI once require a course on *Montana History*? *Could such be an Elective where a new thrust could be injected?*
- Clarify nature and character of Educator Interviews, if/when. (+interface with Harvard Case initiative in Helena)
  
- *End Goals as understanding democracy, government functions, Rule of Law, Critical Thinking/Fake News, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_*
  
- Legislation or Administrative Rules , as appropriate?