

“It is folly to expect our children to become actors in a complex democracy and, then, not prepare them for their roles. That’s why we must redouble our efforts to teach our founding principles. There is no one better to lead that effort than Bruce Cole, who has earned the bipartisan support of American leaders and the respect of educators.”

MICHAEL WEISER
CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON CITIZENSHIP

“Our representative democracy depends on citizens exercising discriminating judgment about policies and politicians. I applaud Bruce Cole’s initiative to strengthen history and civics education in high schools, which is the best way to assure that future citizens have that kind of judgment.”

LEE H. HAMILTON
FORMER U.S. REPRESENTATIVE; DIRECTOR,
THE CENTER ON CONGRESS AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

“American democracy is the noblest tradition of governance in human history. To keep that tradition alive, we must restore the teaching of civics and American history in our schools. EPPC’s History and Civics Education Initiative is a strong step in that direction.”

DR. WILLIAM BENNETT
FORMER SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
AND FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES.

ABOUT EPPC

Founded in 1976, the Ethics and Public Policy Center is Washington, D.C.’s premier institute dedicated to applying the Judeo-Christian moral tradition to critical issues of public policy. EPPC and its scholars have consistently sought to defend the great Western ethical imperatives — respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, individual freedom and responsibility, justice, the rule of law, and limited government. For more information, please visit www.eppc.org.

IMPROVING CIVIC EDUCATION IN OUR SCHOOLS IS A NATIONAL IMPERATIVE.

TO ADVANCE THIS INITIATIVE, PLEASE CONSIDER A DONATION. DR. COLE CAN BE REACHED AT BCOLE@EPPC.ORG OR 202-506-0588.

History and Civics Education Initiative

A decorative graphic of the American flag, showing the stars and stripes, curving across the bottom of the page.

**Proposing Workable Solutions
to Strengthen History and Civics
Education in Schools**

ETHICS
AND
PUBLIC
POLICY
CENTER



The History & Civics Education Initiative

While much has been done to document the crisis of history and civic illiteracy, little has been done to find a solution.

The History and Civics Education Initiative is a project that will, for the first time, analyze the results of the many recent studies of the problem and then, in consultation with leading authorities in the field, develop a comprehensive report outlining the steps that must be taken to improve history and civics education in our nation's K-12 schools.

The report will be shared widely with legislators, administrators, principals, schools of education, and public policy makers across the United States to help them find basic solutions to these pressing problems. This will be the first report of its kind.

Dr. Bruce Cole, Senior Fellow at EPPC and former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, leads the initiative. He will prepare the report in collaboration with some of the nation's leading experts in American history, government and political thought.

The Problem

History and civic literacy is at an alarmingly low level among high school graduates.

In the past few decades our students' knowledge of our country's history and its civic institutions has declined drastically. This is a crisis because a citizenry without such knowledge is like a tree without roots. If we do not know the basic principles on which our country was founded, we will be ill equipped to uphold and defend them.

A landmark study conducted by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Connecticut in 2005 produced stunning results: our nation's high schools are failing to teach the Founding principles and ideas that continue to give our nation strength and purpose.

Incoming college freshmen scored a **failing grade of 51 percent** on a multiple-choice questionnaire designed to measure their knowledge in American

history, government, relationships with other nations, and the free market economy.

Studies conducted by other organizations, including the Department of Education's National Assessment of Education Progress, the American Revolution Center, and the Council on Foreign Relations, confirm that history and civic literacy is at an alarmingly low level among high school graduates.

Without a basic knowledge of the ideals and ideas that inspired the American Founding — once regarded and universally taught as an essential component of a good education — the principle of self-government itself is at risk.

This is a national crisis. If we cannot define the ideas and the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, how can we defend them?