

Brenda POGGE

★ DELEGATE ★

96th District, Virginia House of Delegates

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No, I'm not talking about the Kavanaugh hearing (though what I'm about to share may have some bearing on the current spectacle).

I'm talking about citizens' lack of knowledge about the most basic elements of our government. Many of us have seen the "man/woman on the street" interviews that highlight a shocking obliviousness about our republican form of government. These anecdotal conversations are substantiated by a 2017 [poll conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center](#). Of the survey respondents:

- 37% could not name a single right protected by the First Amendment.
- Only 15% knew that Freedom of Religion is protected by the First Amendment.
- Only 26% could name all three branches of the government.
- 33% could not name any branch of government.

More recently, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation [released poll results indicating that only one-third of Americans can pass a test with multiple choice questions from the U.S. Citizenship test](#). Tellingly, only 19% of respondents under the age of forty-five were able to pass the exam.

Thomas Jefferson famously stated, "Educate and inform the whole mass of the people... They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty."

If United States citizens lack the most rudimentary knowledge about our government, how can our liberty be maintained? Moreover, what effect does this lack of understanding have on the basic functions of government--such as the hearing for a prospective Supreme Court Justice? If the vast majority of Americans do not even know--much less understand the role of--the branches of government, is it any wonder that we are witnessing such levels of dysfunction?

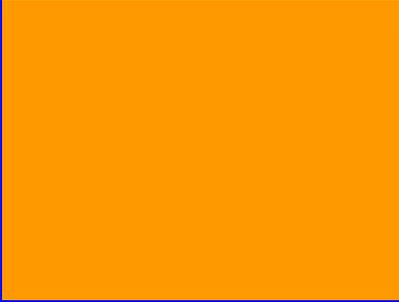
What can you do?

There is no easy answer to this question. I believe that one of the best ways to counteract this alarming downward spiral in civics education is for parents and citizens to hold schools accountable. Direct input from stakeholders can help ensure that schools are teaching the fundamentals of our system of government.

Contact your school board members and school administrators and inquire about the civics education courses being taught to K-12 students. Ask administrators if they believe their school's students would be able to pass a U.S. Citizenship exam...or if they think their students may end up among the 81% who would fail. We need to reverse this pattern, and you can make a difference!

Sincerely,





Delegate Brenda L. Pogge

Paid for and Authorized by Brenda Pogge for
Delegate