

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 2, 2018

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

We write in strong support of the Center for Civic Education's (the Center) two applications for grants under the U.S. Department of Education's Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) program to provide teacher professional development in the field of elementary, middle, and high school education in civics and government.

In 1796, President George Washington said, "a primary object should be the education of our youth in the science of government. In a republic, what species of knowledge can be equally important?" While we could not agree more, unfortunately the 2014 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) civic assessment of eighth graders found there has been no improvement in student civic education knowledge from the previous assessment conducted in 2010. In fact, there has been nearly no change in the number of students at or above the proficient level in civics knowledge between the 1998 and 2014 NAEP civics assessments. The 2014 NAEP found only 23% of students tested at or above proficient.

We believe the remedy to this concerning lack of student civic knowledge is to foster among students a reasoned commitment to the fundamental principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights through evidence-based professional development programs that increase teachers' civic knowledge, understanding, and methodology. Teacher expertise, as research has consistently shown, is one of the most important factors in raising student achievement.

The Center's first proposal is titled "Strengthening Democracy in America (SDA): A Professional Development Program for Secondary School Teachers," and is designed to supplement the Center's evidence-based We the People professional development program with additional curricular materials for students and an online professional development program for middle and high school teachers to promote responsible deliberation and principled responses to current issues in our nation's representative democracy. The second proposal is titled "The James Madison Constitutional Democracy Project" (JMCDP) and would use a newly-developed online professional development program created under the current SEED-funded James Madison Legacy Project to provide 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers with professional development in the We the People curricular program in civics.

The Center estimates that the SDA program will reach 1,500 middle and high school teachers and increase the achievement of at least 78,600 students nationwide. The JMCDP would likely reach more than 1,500 elementary and middle school teachers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, benefitting over 90,000 students, according to the grant applicant.

The Center has a long history of experience and a proven track record in the development of civics materials and teacher professional development. For thirty years, the Center has administered a very popular and effective civic education program, reaching more than 30 million students, which has been supported by members of Congress on both sides of the aisle. It has also received a past Department of Education grant that has helped increase the number of highly effective teachers of high-need students through the professional development of 2,025 teachers. These programs have been validated by numerous research studies and evaluations through the years, including by Georgetown University studies that found the programs have had significant positive outcomes, including a finding that participating teachers' civic knowledge increased and that middle and high school students whose teachers participated in these programs saw greater improvement in their civic knowledge test scores. The evidence-based approaches that resulted in the positive research findings noted above would be continued in the two newly-submitted proposals.

We believe the Center's SEED grant applications are consistent with the intent and priorities for nationwide programs laid out in the Federal Register. It is also consistent with the priorities set by Congress calling for SEED support for nationwide programs in the Explanatory Statement accompanying the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (Public Law 113-235) pertaining to civic education.

If awarded SEED grants, the Center's proposed SDA and JMCDP programs would provide critical support for the training of a new corps of highly effective elementary, middle, and high school teachers of civics and government. This is of the utmost importance to give students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to become competent and responsible citizens guided by a reasoned commitment to the fundamental values and principles of American democracy. Accordingly, we strongly support both of the Center's SEED grant applications and respectfully ask for your careful consideration of these proposals.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



KEVIN McCARTHY  
House Majority Leader



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Member of Congress



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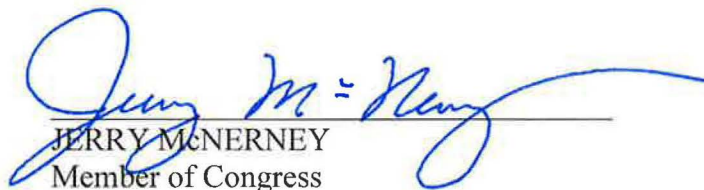
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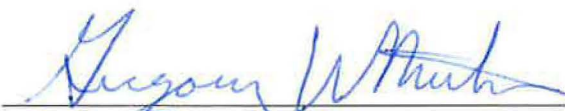
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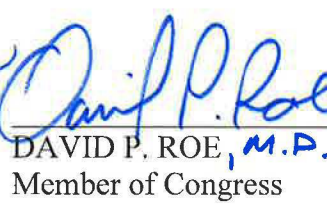
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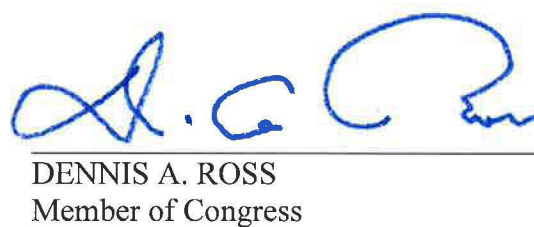
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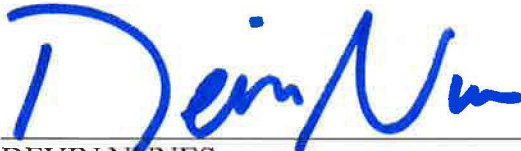
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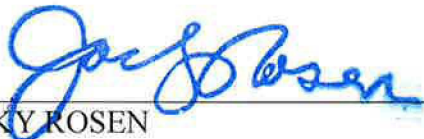
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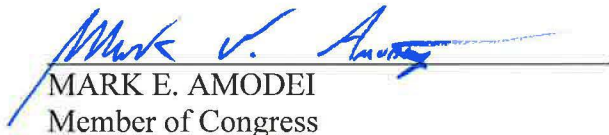
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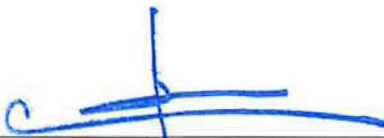
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