

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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\*\*Bill summary included

## KENNEDY, ALEXANDER ON RELEASE OF 2006 NAEP SCORES FOR HISTORY AND CIVICS

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, the National Assessment Governing Board released the 2006 results for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for U.S. history and civics. The performance of 4th, 8th and 12th graders in U.S. history was last assessed in 2001, and their performance in civics was last assessed in 1998.

Senator Kennedy, “The scores released this morning show that we've made some progress, but there's a great deal more to do to ensure that all students are familiar with the lessons of our nation's past and their role in its future.”

Senator Alexander said, “The good news is that across-the-board student achievement in American history is increasing. This is crucial because U.S. history is the most important subject our children study, but has been their worst subject. It is the most important subject because without an understanding of our founding documents and principles, we would be simply another United Nations instead of the United States of America.”

Also today, Senators Kennedy and Alexander re-introduced their bill, The American History and Civics Achievement Act. The bill passed the Senate's Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in September of 2006.

Information on the bill, including a summary, is below. The bill was introduced this morning.

## SENATORS KENNEDY AND ALEXANDER INTRODUCE AMERICAN HISTORY AND CIVICS ACHIEVEMENT ACT

Call for greater focus on teaching and learning in essential subjects

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Senator Lamar Alexander re-introduced legislation to establish a new, 10-state pilot program under the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to assess and improve the knowledge of American history and civics. The National Assessment Governing Board released results earlier today in Boston, Massachusetts, detailing the achievement of students nationwide in U.S. history and civics. Results show there has been slight

progress among lowest achievers in grade 4, and some progress since the assessments were first administered, yet continued underachievement among most American learners in the subjects.

“Teaching the lessons of our nation’s past, and instilling the values of civic responsibility and of the founding of our democracy, is an essential role for America’s schools,” said Senator Edward M. Kennedy. “This is an important step forward for states to enhance their history standards and restore the teaching of history and civics in our nation’s schools.”

U.S. history results showed an increase in student achievement in grades four, eight, and twelve, with the greatest gains achieved by low-performing elementary school students. However, only 65 percent of eighth-grade students and less than half of high school seniors mastered basic levels on the assessment. Scores were slightly higher on the civics assessment, with 70 percent of eighth-graders and 66 percent of twelfth-graders scoring proficient.

“Our pending immigration debate in the Senate has shed even more light on the importance of making sure our students are learning American history and civics,” Alexander said. “Our purpose in creating public schools 150 years ago was so that immigrant children could learn to read and write in English, learn math, and learn what it means to be an American.”

Kennedy and Alexander agreed last Congress on the need for additional data and a state-by-state analysis of learning in American history and civics. Legislation proposed today would provide \$14 million to enable the National Governing Board to select 10 geographically-diverse states to participate in a state-level assessment of American history and civics under the NAEP, and deliver comparable state-by-state results. The Senators plan to pursue the legislation as part of the upcoming reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. This bill was previously passed by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in September of 2006.

The American History and Civics Achievement Act  
Senators Edward M. Kennedy and Lamar Alexander

## Findings

The strength of American democracy and our standing in the world depend on ensuring that our children have a strong understanding of our Nation's past. Yet, in 2006, 30 percent of fourth-graders, 35 percent of eighth-graders, and 53 percent of twelfth-graders scored below basic on the National Assessment of Educational Progress assessment in U.S. history. Similarly, 27 percent of fourth-graders, 30 percent of eighth-graders, and 34 percent of twelfth-graders scored below basic on the National Assessment of Educational Progress assessment in civics. The American History Achievement Act recognizes the challenge in improving the teaching and learning of U.S. history and

civics in our nation's schools, and seeks to promote an appreciation among students for the defining events in our Nation's history and recognize that knowledge of such events can be a catalyst for civic involvement.

#### National Assessment of Educational Progress

This Act amends the National Assessment of Educational Progress Authorization Act to direct the Commissioner for Education Statistics to give a priority to conducting national NAEP assessments of student achievement in U.S. History at least once every 4 years in grades 4, 8, and 12. It also requires the Commissioner to conduct trial State NAEP assessments, in at least ten geographically diverse States, of student achievement in U.S. History in grades 8 and 12, and in Civics in grades 8 and 12. These assessments are to be conducted in connection with previously scheduled NAEP assessments administered to a national sample of students.

#### National Assessment Governing Board

The National Assessment Governing Board, in consultation with the Commissioner for Education Statistics, shall select the States that will participate in the trial State assessments.

#### Authorization of Appropriations

This Act authorizes \$7 million for the fiscal years 2008 and 2009, to conduct the trial assessment, and such sums as may be necessary for succeeding fiscal year. Not more than \$500,000 per fiscal year shall be used by the National Assessment Governing Board to develop and administer the trial State assessments.

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