



The Madison-Lincoln Initiative is a non-profit, non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to strengthening America's constitutional republic by fostering and promoting a robust civic education in schools and colleges



Democracy Chronicles

January 2026 Issue #1

1. From the President and Founder of the Madison-Lincoln Initiative

Dear friends of democracy,

It is a joy to introduce our first issue of the Democracy Chronicles, which we intend to publish each month, promoting the central mission of The Madison-Lincoln Initiative: to foster a massive overhaul of civic education in America in order to strengthen and preserve our democratic republic. The Madison-Lincoln Initiative is a non-partisan, non-profit 501C3 corporation founded in 2023. We believe that a robust civic education is needed to preserve our grand experiment in self-governance, and that, for the most part, our educational system, from K-12 to college, has not given sufficient attention to this subject matter. Our evidence for this belief is the presidential election of 2016 and 2024, in which a large number of Americans have supported an authoritarian agenda with little regard for individual liberty, due process of law, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the equal protection guarantee, and most other provisions of the U.S. Constitution that the current Administration find inconvenient.

Let me be crystal-clear that we are non-partisan. While we make no secret of our dismay about the travesty of the Trump Administration, history has shown that tyranny and fascism are not confined to just one end of the political spectrum, or to just one political party. But in the absence of a rigorous civic education, proselytizers with extremist views have seduced our nation's high school and college students with ugly and distorted narratives hidden beneath a polished veneer. Jefferson warned us all about the need for an educated citizenry in order to preserve our democracy, but our schools and colleges have placed a much higher priority on teaching us math, science, and

reading, and on preparing us for good careers. Those are, of course, important subjects worthy of the high priority we give them---but they are not more important than a civic education. What good does it do us to prepare our kids for good careers if our republic collapses?

Thus, a key goal of The Madison-Lincoln Initiative is to advocate for a massive infusion of civics into the curriculum that our nation's future voters will master. But we are not content to simply become a lobbying organization. We take a hands-on approach to helping teachers foster civics in their classrooms, within the constraints of their mandated curriculum. We also help student clubs advance civic engagement as part of their *raison d'être*.

In 2026, we are launching two major initiatives to promote civic education. One is this monthly newsletter, which will highlight some of the exemplary civic education in many classrooms around the nation. Another is a Democracy Summit, which will take place in July, as America celebrates the 250th anniversary of our founding. A major reason for the Summit is to offer a forum where civic-minded educators and other interested Americans can help share ideas with each other on how best to teach future voters how to protect our democracy from the hands of fascists and other usurpers of freedom. Please watch for further details on this Summit. This first Democracy Summit will be virtual, but in future years we hope to host in-person Summit where fellow democracy defenders can meet face-to-face.

One final word of Introduction to this publication. It would never have gotten off the ground without the stellar skill and dedication of the Managing Editor, Scott Corbett. Scott is my friend as well as a former colleague in the community college world I once worked in. He is a lifetime educator as well as a gifted author who has written over fifteen books. I am profoundly grateful to Scott.

My best, Luis P. Sanchez, President and Founder, The Madison-Lincoln Initiative



This Month's Highlights

1 MLI supports the Mission, Vision & Values of the [California Civics Learning Coalition](#)

The California Civic Learning Coalition—also known as *Californians for Civic Learning*—is a statewide alliance of educators, nonprofits, researchers, and civic organizations working to strengthen civic education across California's public schools.

Rather than operating a single program, the Coalition coordinates advocacy, partnerships, and shared resources to expand effective civic learning statewide. Its work includes:

- advancing sound education policy and funding
- supporting educator professional development

2 Launch of the MLI Teaching Resource Hub

We've been doing important work behind the scenes on our website, and one result is a newly curated collection of practical teaching strategies and programs now available on our **How It Works** page.

Resources are organized into three core categories:

- **Civics Education**
- **Community Projects**
- **Youth Leadership**

These tools support the five pillars of the Madison-Lincoln Initiative: integrity in public office; civil discourse; critical reasoning; democratic engagement; and media literacy. Whether used in classrooms or community settings, they reflect our commitment to

- promoting the State Seal of Civic Engagement
- convening statewide events and summits

strengthening civic understanding in ways that are practical, adaptable, and grounded in democratic values.

Together, these efforts help ensure that civic learning in California is continuous, inclusive, and connected to real-world democratic participation.



Feature Story

“Classrooms Where Civics Comes Alive”

Across the country, educators are transforming civics from a textbook subject into a lived experience.

At **Northgate High School** in Walnut Creek, California teacher **Meg Honey** leads a 45-year tradition of Mock Congress, immersing seniors in researching issues, drafting bills, debating in committees, and voting on legislation.

In **Ocala, Florida**, students at Marion Technical Institute mentor younger peers preparing for simulated congressional hearings, deepening their understanding of civic engagement and public discourse.

Nationally, the **We the People** program engages students in simulated congressional hearings before judges, offering a real-world sense of constitutional democracy. Meanwhile, classrooms using **The Civics Game** let students form political parties, campaign, vote, and govern a classroom “city” through year-long simulations.



Together, these approaches show how civics can move off the page and into active, meaningful experience.



Sources: Wikipedia, ["1800 United States presidential election,"](#) Annenberg Classroom, ["12th Amendment,"](#) ThoughtCo. ["Presidential Election of 1800 Ended in a Tie,"](#)

The presidential election of 1800 produced a dramatic tie between **Thomas Jefferson** and **Aaron Burr**, each receiving 73 electoral votes. This was not the result of a conspiracy but a flaw in the original electoral system, which did not distinguish between votes for president and vice president.

The tie sent the election to the Federalist-controlled House of Representatives. Burr, expected to become vice president, complicated matters through his silence rather than through action.

Key points:

- Federalists considered backing Burr to block Jefferson.
- Hamilton warned that Burr lacked principles, though this reflected personal distrust rather than evidence of a plot.
- Burr did not withdraw, endorse Jefferson, or lobby House members.
- His passive stance allowed speculation but did not constitute an active conspiracy.

After **36 ballots**, Jefferson was elected president, and Burr became vice president. The turmoil led to the **12th Amendment**, requiring electors to cast separate votes for president and vice president.

National Professional Development Opportunities

📌 **Supreme Court Summer Institute for Teachers (2026)**

Two sessions available: **June 7–12** and **June 14–19** <https://streetlaw.org/event/supreme-court-summer-institute-for-teachers/>



📌 **Civic Engagement Academy Workshops**

📌 **Teaching Democracy Conference**

Hosted by **UC Berkeley**,
Scholarships available for

Saturday PD series launching
February 2026, Registration
opens mid-January.
<https://ca4civiclearning.org/>

California teachers.
<https://bse.berkeley.edu/lead>

Civics-Education PD Opportunities Likely Available in 2026

- **Street Law — Supreme Court Summer Institute for Teachers (SCSI 2026)**
Two sessions: **June 7–12, 2026** and **June 21–26, 2026**.
[Learn More / Register](#)
- **National Constitution Center — 2026 Educator Institutes**
Sessions: **June 14–19, June 21–26, July 12–17, July 20–24, 2026**.
[Learn More / Register](#)
- **Jack Miller Center — National Summit on Civic Education (2026)**
Confirmed event: **May 18–19, 2026** (Philadelphia).
[Learn More / Register](#)
- **iCivics — Educator Network & Professional Learning (2026 Cohort)**
Applications open for 2026 Educator Network; ongoing PD resources throughout 2026.
[Learn More / Apply](#)
- **Center for Civic Education (We the People & related programs)**
2025–26 PD calendars active; state affiliates listing 2026 sessions; recurring annual institutes.
[Learn More / Register](#)
- **We the People — National Symposium on Civic Education Research**
March 6–7, 2026, Washington, D.C.
[Learn More / Register](#)
- **University of Arizona Instructor's Hub**
[Visit UA Civics Hub](#)

- Arizona State University Center for American Civics
[Visit ASU Civics Center](#)

Online / Self-Paced Civics-Education PD Opportunities

- iCivics — on-demand professional development for educators
[Learn More](#)
- Facing History & Ourselves — on-demand webinars + virtual PD
[Learn More](#)
- Center for Civic Education — self-paced “We the People” / civics open courses & online PD
[Learn More](#)
- Civics Learning Project — workshops and trainings for K-12 educators
[Learn More](#)
- Educating for American Democracy (EAD) — virtual workshops & PD offerings
[Learn More](#)
- Civics Renewal Network — aggregated PD opportunities list (webinars, courses, workshops)
[Learn More](#)

Policy & Civics Education Updates

- The California Department of Education **has not publicly announced** a review of new or “enhanced” civics frameworks for grades 7-12.

- [Districts statewide are expanding pilot programs for the **State Seal of Civic Engagement**.](#)
- [A 2025 press release about historic investments in American history and civics programs, but it does **not** mention any upcoming grant cycle or spring opening](#)



Brandon Cho is a student leader at **Newbury Park High School** who founded the Madison–Lincoln Initiative’s first student club on campus. Under his leadership, the club has hosted thoughtful discussions on media rights and responsibilities—sparked by clips from *All the President’s Men*—as well as timely conversations about the ethics of contemporary congressional redistricting. Brandon’s commitment to civic life is clear in his own words: *“I am a high school student who really cares about this country. I want to do all I can to promote civic engagement and encourage civic discourse. I started a club at my high school to inform my peers on these important topics.”*

We are honored to recognize Brandon as one of MLI’s student leaders.

Civics Quiz — Test Your Knowledge!

1. How many voting members are in the U.S. House of Representatives? A) 50 B) 100 C) 435 D) 538
2. Which branch of government has the power to declare war? A) Executive B) Legislative C) Judicial D) State Governors
3. The First Amendment protects all except which of the following? A) Speech B) Religion C) Press D) The right to a speedy trial
4. What is the term length for a U.S. Senator? A) 2 years B) 4 years C) 6 years D) 8 years

[Get Involved](#)


- Volunteer with MLI
- Join the Council of Civic Champions
- Nominate a teacher or student actively working to advance Civics Education

Memorial Events & Calendar

- **Jan 23** — Ratification of the 24th Amendment (1964)
- **Feb 3** — Ratification of the 15th Amendment (1870)
- **Mar 7** — “Bloody Sunday” and the Selma March (1965)
- **Apr 30** — Washington’s First Inauguration (1789)

Support Our Work

Your support strengthens civics education across California. Every contribution makes a difference.

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**Answer Key: 1) C 2) B 3)
D 4) C**



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