

***AMERICAN BIRTHRIGHT:
THE CIVICS ALLIANCE'S
MODEL K-12 SOCIAL STUDIES
STANDARDS***

ACTIVISTS' KIT

**Civics
Alliance**

from NATIONAL ASSOCIATION *of* SCHOLARS

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OVERVIEW

The [Civics Alliance](#), a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to improving America's civics education, has created [American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards](#).

State standards are the single most influential documents in America's education system. State education departments use them to provide guidance to each public K-12 school district and charter school as they create their own courses. State standards also influence what textbook authors write and what assessment companies such as the College Board test for in their advanced placement examinations. They affect teacher training and they provide the framework for teachers' individual lesson plans. Private schools and homeschool parents also keep an eye on state standards.

The Civics Alliance wants to improve every aspect of American social studies instruction by inspiring America's state education departments to provide social studies standards that teach American students their birthright of liberty.

Every student should be educated to be another Harry Truman—a high-school graduate who, without ever graduating from college, has a solid grasp of history and is capable of serving as an officer, a judge, a senator, and president.

American Birthright teaches students to identify the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government; assess the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and describe how the evolution of these ideals in different times and places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals.

Above all, *American Birthright* teaches about the expansion of American liberty to include all Americans, the contributions that Americans from every walk of life have made to our shared history of liberty, and America's championship of liberty throughout the world. Students will learn of heroes of liberty such as Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ronald Reagan.

American Birthright will prepare our children for college and career because it provides comprehensive content knowledge in History, Geography, Civics, and Economics, as well as sustained coverage of Western Civilization, World History, United States History, and Civics. *American Birthright* integrates its standards with a series of primary source documents, so students can learn the actual materials of history. *American Birthright's* straightforward structure makes it easy for teachers to

use and easy for parents to hold teachers accountable for how well they teach social studies. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards also facilitate reliable assessment, whether by state-level testing or tests by school districts and individual teachers.

American Birthright will especially benefit the most disadvantaged students. Disadvantaged students benefit from intensive content instruction even more than better-off students, who receive large amounts of content knowledge from their families and peers. Content standards that abbreviate content foster an unequal society because they especially harm the education of disadvantaged children. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards fulfill America's promise of equal educational opportunities for everyone.

States and school districts should create social studies standards modeled on *American Birthright*, to teach American students their birthright of liberty.

ACTIVISTS' BRIEF: CONDENSED

- 1. States and school districts should create social studies standards modeled on *American Birthright*, to teach American students their birthright of liberty.**
- 2. State academic content standards are the most influential documents in American education because they shape what public school districts teach, what textbook authors write, teacher training, and state and local assessment.**
- 3. *American Birthright* appeals to a broad majority of Americans because it does not pursue a narrow, partisan agenda.**
- 4. *American Birthright* teaches students to identify the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government; assess the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and describe how the evolution of these ideals in different times and places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals.**
- 5. *American Birthright* provides comprehensive content knowledge in History, Geography, Civics, and Economics, by means of sustained coverage of Western Civilization, World History, United States History, and Civics, integrated with an extensive series of primary source documents.**
- 6. *American Birthright* increases teacher accountability by focusing on factual content.**
- 7. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards facilitate reliable assessment.**
- 8. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards fulfill America's promise of equal educational opportunities for everyone because disadvantaged students benefit from intensive content instruction even more than better-off students, who receive large amounts of content knowledge from their families and peers.**
- 9. *American Birthright* prepare students for college and career, because good colleges and good jobs require competitive and ambitious students and workers with broad background knowledge and the talent to absorb, synthesize and make use of large numbers of facts**
- 10. *American Birthright* helps remove Critical Race Theory (CRT) from K-12 social studies instruction work by replacing CRT with something better—standards that teach students America's true history of liberty.**

ACTIVISTS' BRIEF

INTRODUCTION

Headline Argument

States and school districts should create social studies standards modeled on *American Birthright* because it teaches American students their birthright of liberty.

What Is *American Birthright*?

The [Civics Alliance](#), a coalition of organizations and individuals dedicated to improving America's civics education, has created [American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards](#) to teach America's foundational history of liberty. *American Birthright* helps Americans to craft the social studies standards, curricula, textbooks, and lesson plans we need to sustain our republic and our nation.

Why Do State Social Studies Standards Matter?

State academic content standards are the most influential documents in American education. They shape what public school districts and charter schools teach. They also influence what textbook authors write, and what knowledge assessment companies (such as the College Board) test for in their Advanced Placement examinations. They affect teacher training and they provide the framework for teachers' lesson plans.

What's Wrong With Existing State Social Studies Standards?

Too many state education departments and educators impose standards that combine misguided pedagogical theory, low academic standards, and anti-American animus. They educate young Americans who are ignorant of America's history, indifferent to liberty, and estranged from their country. Americans must restore social studies instruction centered on freedom, so as to educate a new generation of Americans to secure the blessings of liberty.

American Birthright: The Standard for Liberty

American Birthright inspires America's state education departments to provide social studies standards that teach American students their birthright of liberty. It also equips governors, state legislators, school boards, and grassroots activists to take back their schools, by providing a model for what a proper social studies instruction should be. Americans can use it to challenge the education establishment: Why don't you teach this?

American Birthright: Principled Standards for All Americans

American Birthright appeals to a broad majority of Americans because it does not pursue a narrow, partisan agenda. Yet it does not pursue consensus for its own sake. Too much of America's educational establishment has abandoned America's bedrock principles. *American Birthright* always tells America's story of liberty clearly and proudly instead of searching for a hollow consensus with an educational establishment fixated on removing that story from our classrooms.

CONTENTS

The Story of Liberty

American Birthright teaches students to identify the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government; assess the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and describe how the evolution of these ideals in different times and places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals.

The Subjects of Liberty

American Birthright provides comprehensive content knowledge in History, Geography, Civics, and Economics. History teaches us where our liberty came from. Geography allows us to trace the story of liberty on the map. Civics teaches us how citizens act to ensure our government works to maintain our liberty. Economics teaches us about the freedom to buy and to sell—the freedom in private life that is the essential buttress to political liberty.

The Themes of Liberty

American Birthright provides sustained coverage of Western Civilization, World History, United States History, and Civics. Within those four main areas, students learn throughout about the role in history of Liberty; Faith and Nations; Science and Technology; Economics; State and Society; and Culture. All these lessons teach them to understand the exceptional but fragile achievement embodied in the creation and preservation of the American republic.

Grades K-7: Patriotic Introduction

American Birthright provides a basic sequence of courses from Kindergarten through Grade 7 that introduces students to the geography, history, and government of their towns, states, country, and world, as well as an introduction to economics. This sequence centers its instruction on America's symbols, geography, history, and government.

Grades 8-12: The History of Liberty

American Birthright provides an advanced sequence of courses in Grades 8 through 12 on Ancient and Classical Mediterranean Civilizations, the Development of Western Civilization, World History, United States History, and Civics. This coherent sequence culminates in United States History and Civics, to emphasize the point that social studies instruction should sustain American liberty.

The Documents of Liberty

American Birthright integrates the upper-level learning standards with an extensive series of primary source documents. Students should learn the actual materials of history and not just textbook interpretations, which often distort the past. *American Birthright* provides these documents for the upper grades and encourages teachers to integrate them into instruction for the lower grades.

Just the Facts

American Birthright's learning standards are facts to learn. *American Birthright* sketches methodologies for History, Geography, Civics, and Economics, as well as pedagogical rules of thumb (Facts, Primary Sources, Rigor, Historical Integrity, Impartiality, Individuals Matter, Contingency, Humility, Broadmindedness, and Charitable Interpretation), but *American Birthright* doesn't require skills instruction. Teachers should choose freely how students learn.

American Virtues

American Birthright supports instruction in virtue. Students learn that Champion liberty for others as you would have them champion liberty for you follows naturally from Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Parents and teachers can build on the facts taught by *American Birthright* to instill in students a love of virtue to match their love of liberty.

Selection Criterion: Significance for the Story of Liberty

American Birthright doesn't mention individuals or events to provide representation of any identity-group. It selects individual items to teach students the story of liberty in human history and to describe how the ideals and institutions of liberty have created and shaped America. Any social studies standard should use significance for the story of liberty as its primary selection criterion for individuals and events.

ADVANTAGES

Flexibility

American Birthright is designed so that states and school districts can alter the sequence as they see fit. States and school districts can create equally rigorous standards by abbreviating some topics, expanding others, or adjusting the course sequences. They also can integrate United States History instruction with instruction in regional, state, and local history. States and school districts that adjust the course sequence can make age-appropriate adjustment to the learning standards.

Teacher Freedom

American Birthright does not provide an entire curriculum. Teachers are free to teach each topic as they see fit, to add new topics, to incorporate independent lesson plans and sequences, and to unite items from these learning standards into thematic units. They also are free to reorganize the sequence in which they teach these topics, as well as to review material from earlier grades in any course of instruction.

Accountability: Clear Organization

American Birthright has been written so that every American can understand it easily. Each grade's standards are written in bullet points and it contains only four social studies disciplines. *American Birthright* makes it easy for teachers to use and easy for parents to hold teachers accountable for how well they teach social studies.

Accountability: Pedagogy

American Birthright aligns with pedagogies that emphasize rigorous standards, individual effort, classroom instruction, and content knowledge. These pedagogies increase school accountability to parents and policymakers. You can't tell how well teachers instruct an individual student when they're assessing group projects, protests, "skills," or ideological commitments—or when all students pass, no matter how little they've learned.

True Preparation for College and Career

American Birthright prepare students for college and career. Good colleges and good jobs require competitive and ambitious Americans with broad background knowledge; the talent to absorb, synthesize and make use of large numbers of facts; the capacity to listen sympathetically to multiple points of view and to engage in free debate; the readiness to be judged for their ability to produce timely and competent work; and independence of conscience and mind.

Equal Opportunity

Disadvantaged students benefit from intensive content instruction even more than better-off students, who receive large amounts of content knowledge from their families and peers. Content standards that focus on skills and abbreviate content foster an unequal society because they especially harm the education of disadvantaged children. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards fulfill America's promise of equal educational opportunities for everyone.

Reliable Assessment

American Birthright's intensive content standards facilitate reliable assessment, whether by national companies such as the Educational Testing Service (ETS), state-level testing, or tests by school districts and individual teachers. Its content standards provide enough material to make it easy both for teachers and for large organizations such as ETS to create tests that accurately assess student knowledge.

Teacher Training

American Birthright guides proper teacher training. If teachers do not already know this material, it tells them what they need to learn for their professional development. It also guides the teachers of teachers, in colleges and education schools, as they create courses in history, economics, political science, geography, and education.

Out-Competing Critical Race Theory

Attempts to ban Critical Race Theory (CRT) won't work if education reformers can't offer anything to replace it. *American Birthright* provides an alternate, superior model to social studies instruction. *American Birthright* makes the campaign to remove CRT from K-12 social studies instruction work because it replaces CRT with something better—social studies standards that teach students America's true history of liberty.

COMPLEMENTS

Good Curricula

Curricula that align with *American Birthright* include Hillsdale College's [The Hillsdale 1776 Curriculum](#); [Great Hearts Academies'](#) and [Basis Curriculum Schools'](#) general approach to social studies instruction; [1776 Unites'](#) focused lesson plans on African-American history; and [AAT Education'](#)s forthcoming American history curriculum, designed around Wilfred M. McClay's U.S. history textbook [Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story](#) (2019).

Companion Legislation

State policymakers should pass [legislation](#) to provide proper social studies instruction. These laws should [prohibit the use of discriminatory pedagogies and action civics](#) in public K-12 classes; require [primary-source](#) based [high-school](#) instruction in [Western Civilization](#), [United States History](#), and [Civics](#); require [academic standards be approved by state policymakers](#); and increase the number of [required history and civics courses for social studies teachers](#).

ACTION GUIDE

Grassroots activists will need to take part in a long campaign to ensure both that *American Birthright* is adopted by states and school district, and to ensure that it is actually used properly in the classroom by teachers. We cannot plan out what precisely grassroots activists should do in each part of the United States—and we should not try, because we can only make an educated guess about their local situations, while grassroots activists will know. But we can provide a rough Action Guide, to help orient grassroots activists in their work.

The Situation in Each State

Each state has its own [K-12 Social Studies Standards](#) and its own [Statutes](#) governing social studies education. Most importantly, each state delegates a different amount of authority to the states and the school districts. State standards have great informal influence in any case, but it is important to determine precisely how much formal power they have to determine local standards and curricula. The Civics Alliance is working on producing an information packet for each state, but grassroots activists should research the situation in their own state, so they can know precisely how to press for reform.

Standards Are Not Curricula

State content standards are not curricula, which are determined by school districts and individual teachers. It is important to make that distinction—not least because fixing standards is only the beginning of education reform. Standards allow citizens to hold school districts and teachers accountable, but they still need to be held accountable. Moreover, they need to be provided proper curricula—individual lesson plans.

Curricula that align with *American Birthright* include Hillsdale College's [The Hillsdale 1776 Curriculum](#); [Great Hearts Academies'](#) and [Basis Curriculum Schools'](#) general approach to social studies instruction; [1776 Unites'](#) focused lesson plans on African-American history; and [AAT Education'](#)s forthcoming American history curriculum, designed around Wilfred M. McClay's U.S. history textbook [Land of Hope: An Invitation to the Great American Story](#) (2019). Grassroots activists also should call for local school districts to adopt complementary curricula.

Citizen Education

Most Americans don't understand how important state content standards are in shaping K-12 education. Grassroots activists must tell them that it matters, by every means at their disposal. We have provided a CONDENSED ACTIVISTS' BRIEF:

- 1. State academic content standards are the most influential documents in American education because they shape what public school districts teach, what textbook authors write, the content of teacher training, and state and local assessment.**
- 2. *American Birthright* will inspire America's state education departments to provide social studies standards that teach American students their birthright of liberty.**
- 3. *American Birthright* appeals to a broad majority of Americans because it does not pursue a narrow, partisan agenda.**
- 4. *American Birthright* teaches students to identify the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government; assess the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and describe how the evolution of these ideals in different times and places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals.**
- 5. *American Birthright* provides comprehensive content knowledge in History, Geography, Civics, and Economics, by means of sustained coverage of Western Civilization, World History, United States History, and Civics, integrated with an extensive series of primary source documents.**
- 6. *American Birthright* increases teacher accountability, by focusing on factual content.**
- 7. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards facilitate reliable assessment.**
- 8. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards fulfill America's promise of equal educational opportunities for everyone because disadvantaged students benefit from intensive content instruction even more than better-off students, who receive large amounts of content knowledge from their families and peers.**

9. *American Birthright* prepare students for college and career, because good colleges and good jobs require competitive and ambitious students and workers with broad background knowledge and the talent to absorb, synthesize and make use of large numbers of facts
10. *American Birthright* makes the campaign to remove Critical Race Theory (CRT) from K-12 social studies instruction work because it replaces CRT with something better—social studies standards that teach students America’s true history of liberty.

State Policymakers

State policymakers play a crucial role in pressing state Education Departments to revise their standards, both in the normal course of revision and by special intervention—among other things, by holding legislative hearings on social studies standards. Grassroots activists should work to inform state policymakers of the trouble with existing social studies standards, and why *American Birthright* provides a good model for an alternative. They should urge state policymakers to endorse *American Birthright* publicly and to make clear to state Education Departments that their standards, and all accompanying teacher training, written resources, etc., should follow the *American Birthright* model. State policymakers should also make sure that the revision process for state standards includes education reformers, and not just be delegated to the permanent education bureaucracy.

State Legislation

States haven’t passed academic content standards as laws until now, because they are long and complex. That probably will continue to be the case. But states can pass simpler legislation to shape content standards, in ways that will ensure that state Education Departments have to craft their social studies standards in ways that align with *American Birthright*. We particularly recommend pushing for state policymakers to pass [legislation](#) to provide proper social studies instruction. These laws should [prohibit the use of discriminatory pedagogies and action civics](#) in public K-12 classes; require [primary-source](#) based [high-school](#) instruction in [Western Civilization](#), [United States History](#), and [Civics](#); require [academic standards be approved by state policymakers](#); and increase the number of [required history and civics courses for social studies teachers](#).

School Districts

School districts also possess considerable power to set standards—although often severely constrained by state standards. Grassroots activists should work to get their school boards and school district administrators to adopt standards based on *American Birthright*. (Work on state legislation to make school boards more accountable would also be useful, notably to shift the [school board elections](#) to Election Day, and to make it easier to recall [school board members](#).)

School Districts: Follow-Through

Grassroots activists also need to make sure that school district administrators and teachers follow through and teach according to the *American Birthright* standards. School Board members should exercise their oversight powers and make sure that teachers use curriculum that aligns with these standards. Grassroots activists should also work for [curriculum transparency](#) and [financial transparency](#) in the public schools (both as state law and as school district rule), so as to ensure that administrators and teachers actually comply with the *American Birthright* standards and with citizen intent.

State and Local Assessment

Reliable state and local assessments, crafted outside the classroom, would be a wonderful way to assess whether teachers are teaching *American Birthright* properly. The problem is that assessments also can become tools by the education establishment to smuggle in radical education standards by the backdoor. Grassroots activists should consider whether to call for external state and local assessments, as a way to increase school accountability, but only if they are sure they cannot be misused by the education establishment.

Local Modification

American Birthright isn't meant to be a one-size-fits-all model. Grassroots activists ought to modify it to fit their states and their school districts. But grassroots activists also should be aware that the education establishment can use the argument of local modification to sabotage *American Birthright*—to water it down, to include mandated and counter-productive skills instruction, to include elements of radical identity-politics, Critical Race Theory, or action civics. Activists should make sure that the personnel of whatever committee decides on local modification includes education reformers who will preserve the core of *American Birthright*, and keep out poison-pill modifications.

ACTION GUIDE: TIPS FOR NEW ACTIVISTS

Citizens who don't have experience at grassroots activism should use these tips.

- **Organization: Local Allies.** Find like-minded allies quickly. Activism becomes much more effective when you have a group of supporters and when you can coordinate with other groups.
- **Organization: National Groups.** Ask national groups for help. They often have resources and contacts you can use, and they can provide publicity.
- **Publicity: Social Media.** Use social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Develop **hashtags** to promote your cause (e.g., #AmericanBirthright, #EducationReform).
- **Publicity: Graphics Software.** Use PowerPoint and other free/cheap software to create graphics for your handouts, PDFs, and other web or printed resources.
- **Research: Substance.** Research your topic thoroughly. Where social studies standards are concerned, please read both *American Birthright* and the existing social studies standards in your state/school district, so you can speak in detail about the advantages of *American Birthright* and the flaws of the existing state standards.
- **Research: Funding Sources.** Find out who's paying for materials referred to in social studies standards, including recommended curriculum. Research their ideological affiliations.
- **Research: Process.** State education departments frequently have a highly technical process and schedule for recruiting personnel to craft social studies standards, and for accepting comments from the public. Legislative committees also have a complicated process and schedule for accepting testimony. School boards have their own process for putting new items on the agenda and for listening to citizens. Research the process needed to get *American Birthright* on policymakers' agendas, to submit comments to education department website, and everything else you need to do to argue for it most effectively.
- **Research: Reference Material.** Read the footnotes, endnotes, and bibliography of state standards. Vague language in the text often references radical ideology such as Critical Race Theory that is stated explicitly in the documents referred to

in the reference material. Effective arguments against the ideological assumptions of state standards frequently depend upon reading the bibliography.

- **Outreach: Contact Policymakers.** Contact your governor, your state superintendent, your state representative, your state senator, and your school board. Look up their web pages to see where to direct your correspondence. Make your arguments—always in a civil tone. We’ve provided model letters on the Civics Alliance’s “Grassroots Resources” webpage. (<https://civicsalliance.org/american-birthright-grassroots-resources/>) Combine email with phone calls and letters—phone calls and letters still make more of an impression with some policymakers. Policymakers won’t know what you want if you don’t tell them. It’s also important in your later work to be able to say that you *have* contacted policymakers, especially if they haven’t responded positively to your requests—or responded at all. You can ask them to give the public a good reason for their noncompliance.
- **Outreach: Ask for Commitment.** Ask policymakers to make a simple commitment: e.g., “Will you commit to adopting *American Birthright* as the state social studies standard?” Be polite, but include a request that has a simple Yes/No answer. Don’t ask vague questions which will allow them to reply with vaguely supportive but noncommittal language.
- **Outreach: Occasions to Write.** Whenever there’s a piece of relevant news, use it as an occasion to write—to your fellow supporters, to policymakers, to the media. Keep up a drumbeat of news—but you have to have a reason for each new letter.
- **Outreach: Testimony.** Prepare yourself to give concise, even-tempered, well-grounded testimony in public venues. Practice out loud giving a two-minute piece of testimony, grounded in personal experience and in precise references to text. Write it out so it can be re-used as a letter or publicity—and so you can see how persuasive it is, cold on the page. Send this written testimony in along with your spoken testimony, CC-ed broadly to everyone who needs to know about what you’re saying, so that officials cannot hide your testimony.
- **Instant Resources:** Read the materials at Parents Defending Education’s “Engage” webpage. (<https://defendinged.org/engage/>) Also look at the Civic Alliance’s “Local Policy Resources” webpage. (<https://civicsalliance.org/local-policy-resources/>) These will provide many more useful tips.

MODEL RESOLUTION

Grassroots activists should consider drafting Resolutions in favor of *American Birthright*. Resolutions express the public sentiment of a group of citizens, a public body such as a city council, or a private organization such as a parents' league. They don't make law, but they encourage policymakers to pass laws and resolutions—and they're useful sources of publicity in themselves, since grassroots activists can issue a press release every time an organization passes a Resolution, and keep lists of organizations that have passed Resolutions in favor of *American Birthright*.

Resolutions should call either on a state authority such as the State Education Department, or a local authority such as a particular School District, to adopt *American Birthright*. We have crafted one model resolution, which should be easy to adapt for either purpose.

Model Resolution Text

We call on the {State Education Department} / {Name School District} to adopt new social studies standards, based upon [American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards](#). *American Birthright* is rigorous, clearly written, and appeals to a broad majority of Americans, because it does not pursue a narrow, partisan agenda. *American Birthright* will provide our children social studies instruction centered on freedom, so as to educate them to secure the blessings of liberty.

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American Birthright then provides an advanced sequence of courses in Grades 8 through 12 on Ancient and Classical Mediterranean Civilizations, the Development of Western Civilization, World History, United States History, and Civics. This coherent sequence culminates in United States History and Civics, to emphasize the point that social studies instruction should sustain American liberty.

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American Birthright's learning standards are facts to learn. *American Birthright* sketches methodologies for History, Geography, Civics, and Economics, as well as pedagogical rules of thumb, but *American Birthright* doesn't require skills instruction. Our teachers should choose freely how their students learn.

American Birthright has been written so that every teacher and parent can understand it easily. Each grade's standards are written in bullet points and it contains only four social studies disciplines. *American Birthright's* straightforward structure makes it easy for teachers to use and easy for parents to hold teachers accountable for how well they teach social studies. *American Birthright's* focus on factual content also encourages accountability. We can't tell how well our teachers instruct an individual student when they're assessing group projects, protests, "skills," or ideological commitments—or when all students pass, no matter how little they've learned.

American Birthright's intensive content standards also facilitate reliable assessment, whether by national companies such as the Educational Testing Service (ETS), state-level testing, or tests by school districts and individual teachers. Its content standards provide enough material to make it easy both for teachers and for large organizations such as ETS to create tests that accurately assess student knowledge.

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be judged for their ability to produce timely and competent work; and independence of conscience and mind.

American Birthright will especially benefit the most disadvantaged students. Disadvantaged students benefit from intensive content instruction even more than better-off students, who receive large amounts of content knowledge from their families and peers. Content standards that focus on skills and abbreviate content foster an unequal society because they especially harm the education of disadvantaged children. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards fulfill America's promise of equal educational opportunities for everyone. {State Education Department} /{Name School District} should work immediately to adopt new social studies standards, based on [*American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*](#).

MODEL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Grassroots activists should consider drafting a Letter to the Editor in favor of *American Birthright*. A Letter to the Editor can help persuade public opinion. The Letter to the Editor is also a good model for any very short written argument in favor of *American Birthright*.

Model Letter to the Editor Text

The {Name School District} / {State Education Department} should adopt new social studies standards based on [American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards](#). *American Birthright* is rigorous, clearly written, and appeals to a broad majority of Americans, because it does not pursue a partisan agenda. *American Birthright* already has been [endorsed by large number of organizations and individuals from around the country](#).

American Birthright teaches students to identify the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government; assess the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and describe how the evolution of these ideals in different times and places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals.

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The {Name School District} / {State Education Department} should work immediately to adopt new social studies standards, based on [*American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*](#).

MODEL LETTER TO A POLICYMAKER

Grassroots activists should consider drafting a Letter to a Policymaker in favor of *American Birthright*. A Letter to a Policymaker can help persuade a policymaker to take action in favor of *American Birthright*.

Our modern Letter to a Policymaker differs from our Letter to an Editor most importantly by including room for Personal Information such as: I am a constituent; I live in X; my children attend school at X; their current social studies instruction is not sufficient because X. Policymakers (rightly) care more when you can link a request to your own personal experience. Grassroots activists should be sure to connect the call to support *American Birthright* with their own experience about the problems with social studies education in their local schools.

A Policymaker can include a governor, an education commissioner, a state senator, a state representative, a principal, a school board member, and more. Grassroots activists should tailor this letter to the particular policymaker they're writing to, and make sure that what they're asking for is something that lies within their correspondent's power.

Model Letter to a Policymaker Text

Dear {Title} {Name},

I urge you to publicly support [American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards](#), and to tell the {State Education Department} that they should adopt new social studies standards based *American Birthright*. *American Birthright* is rigorous, clearly written, and appeals to a broad majority of Americans, because it does not pursue a partisan agenda. *American Birthright* already has been [endorsed by large number of organizations and individuals from around the country](#).

American Birthright teaches students to identify the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government; assess the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and describe how the evolution of these ideals in different times and places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals.

American Birthright will prepare our children for college and career because it provides comprehensive content knowledge in History, Geography, Civics, and Economics, as

well as sustained coverage of Western Civilization, World History, United States History, and Civics. *American Birthright* integrates its standards with a series of primary source documents, so students can learn the actual materials of history. *American Birthright's* straightforward structure makes it easy for teachers to use and easy for parents to hold teachers accountable for how well they teach social studies. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards also facilitate reliable assessment, whether by state-level testing or tests by school districts and individual teachers.

American Birthright will especially benefit the most disadvantaged students. Disadvantaged students benefit from intensive content instruction even more than better-off students, who receive large amounts of content knowledge from their families and peers. Content standards that abbreviate content foster an unequal society because they especially harm the education of disadvantaged children. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards fulfill America's promise of equal educational opportunities for everyone.

{Personal Information: I am a constituent; I live in X; my children attend school at X; their current social studies instruction is not sufficient because X.}

Please publicly support [*American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*](#), and urge the {State Education Department} to work immediately to adopt new social studies standards, based *American Birthright*.

Best wishes,

{Name}

MODEL SPEECHES AND LETTERS

Grassroots activists should be prepared to make a more detailed argument in favor of *American Birthright*. This argument can take the form of a speech at a City Council Meeting, a speech at a School Board Meeting, or a Letter to a School board. These Speeches and Letters should be longer than a Letter to the Editor or a Letter to a Policymaker. This resource should be used for any purpose that requires a longer argument in favor of the *American Birthright* social studies standards.

Model Speeches and Letters Text

The {Name School District} should adopt new social studies standards. I recommend that we adopt standards based on [American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards](#). *American Birthright* is rigorous, clearly written, and appeals to a broad majority of Americans, because it does not pursue a narrow, partisan agenda. *American Birthright* already has been [endorsed by large number of organizations and individuals from around the country](#). *American Birthright* will provide our children social studies instruction centered on freedom, so as to educate them to secure the blessings of liberty.

American Birthright teaches students to identify the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government; assess the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and describe how the evolution of these ideals in different times and places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals.

American Birthright provides comprehensive content knowledge in History, Geography, Civics, and Economics, as well as sustained coverage of Western Civilization, World History, United States History, and Civics. Within those four main areas, students learn throughout about the role in history of Liberty; Faith and Nations; Science and Technology; Economics; State and Society; and Culture. All these lessons teach them to understand the exceptional but fragile achievement embodied in the creation and preservation of the American republic.

American Birthright provides a basic sequence of courses from Kindergarten through Grade 7 that introduces students to the geography, history, and government of their towns, states, country, and world, as well as an introduction to economics. This sequence centers its instruction on America's symbols, geography, history, and government.

American Birthright then provides an advanced sequence of courses in Grades 8 through 12 on Ancient and Classical Mediterranean Civilizations, the Development of Western Civilization, World History, United States History, and Civics. This coherent sequence culminates in United States History and Civics, to emphasize the point that social studies instruction should sustain American liberty.

American Birthright integrates the upper-level learning standards with an extensive series of primary source documents. Students should learn the actual materials of history and not just textbook interpretations, which often distort the past. *American Birthright* provides these documents for the upper grades and encourages teachers to integrate them into instruction for the lower grades.

American Birthright's learning standards are facts to learn. *American Birthright* sketches methodologies for History, Geography, Civics, and Economics, as well as pedagogical rules of thumb, but *American Birthright* doesn't require skills instruction. Our teachers should choose freely how their students learn.

American Birthright has been written so that every teacher and parent can understand it easily. Each grade's standards are written in bullet points and it contains only four social studies disciplines. *American Birthright's* straightforward structure makes it easy for teachers to use and easy for parents to hold teachers accountable for how well they teach social studies. *American Birthright's* focus on factual content also encourages accountability. We can't tell how well our teachers instruct an individual student when they're assessing group projects, protests, "skills," or ideological commitments—or when all students pass, no matter how little they've learned.

American Birthright's intensive content standards also facilitate reliable assessment, whether by national companies such as the Educational Testing Service (ETS), state-level testing, or tests by school districts and individual teachers. Its content standards provide enough material to make it easy both for teachers and for large organizations such as ETS to create tests that accurately assess student knowledge.

American Birthright will prepare our children for college and career. Good colleges and good jobs require what *American Birthright* will produce—competitive and ambitious students and workers with broad background knowledge; the talent to absorb, synthesize and make use of large numbers of facts; the capacity to listen sympathetically to multiple points of view and to engage in free debate; the readiness to be judged for their ability to produce timely and competent work; and independence of conscience and mind.

***American Birthright* will especially benefit the most disadvantaged students. Disadvantaged students benefit from intensive content instruction even more than better-off students, who receive large amounts of content knowledge from their families and peers. Content standards that focus on skills and abbreviate content foster an unequal society because they especially harm the education of disadvantaged children. *American Birthright's* intensive content standards fulfill America's promise of equal educational opportunities for everyone.**

{Name School District} should work immediately to adopt new social studies standards, based on [*American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCES

Grassroots activists should publicize American Birthright on social media. We provide several samples posts they can use, in text form and in graphical form.

Sample Text Social Media Posts

States and school districts should create social studies standards modeled on *American Birthright* because it teaches American students their birthright of liberty.

Join me in supporting *American Birthright*: civicsalliance.org/american-birthright.

*

The time is now to reclaim our country's history and civic education for K-12 students.

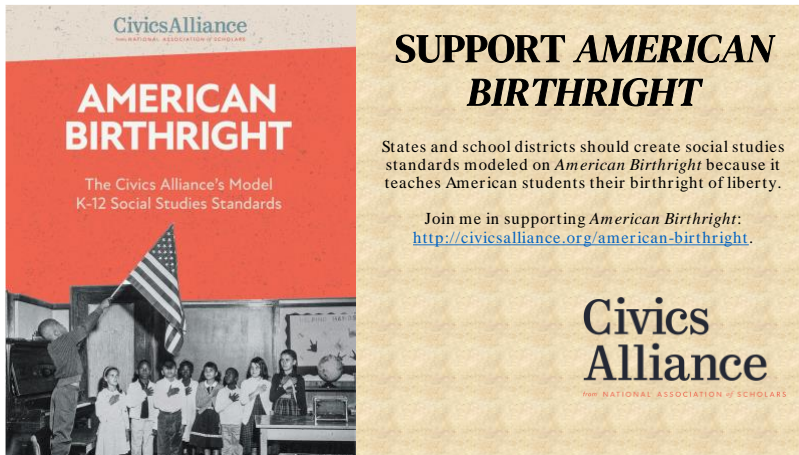
Ask your governor, your state senator, your state representative, and your school board to support *American Birthright*: civicsalliance.org/american-birthright.

*

America needs social studies standards that teach liberty to ensure the future of our republic.

Learn about *American Birthright*: civicsalliance.org/american-birthright.

Sample Graphics Social Media Posts




This social media post features a red and white graphic on the left and a tan background on the right. The graphic includes the Civics Alliance logo, the title 'AMERICAN BIRTHRIGHT', and a photo of a teacher and students in a classroom. The tan background contains the title 'SUPPORT AMERICAN BIRTHRIGHT', a paragraph about social studies standards, a call to action with a URL, and the Civics Alliance logo.

CivicsAlliance
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS

AMERICAN BIRTHRIGHT

The Civics Alliance's Model
K-12 Social Studies Standards

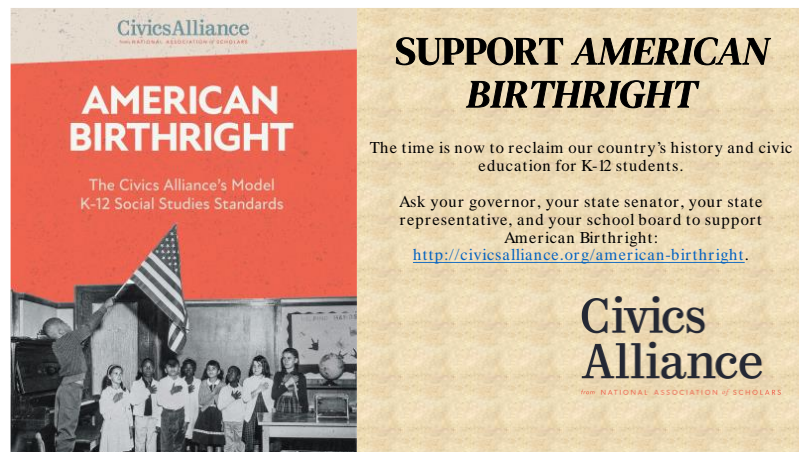


SUPPORT AMERICAN BIRTHRIGHT

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Join me in supporting *American Birthright*:
<http://civicsalliance.org/american-birthright>.

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CivicsAlliance
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS

AMERICAN BIRTHRIGHT

The Civics Alliance's Model
K-12 Social Studies Standards

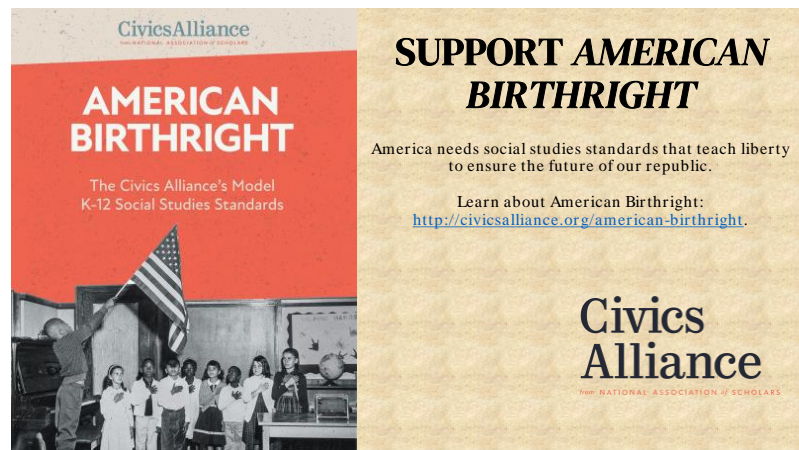


SUPPORT AMERICAN BIRTHRIGHT

The time is now to reclaim our country's history and civic education for K-12 students.

Ask your governor, your state senator, your state representative, and your school board to support American Birthright:
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ACTION SUGGESTIONS

FOR STATE POLICYMAKERS

State policymakers (governors, state senators, and state representatives) play a crucial role in improving state social studies standards. They must work for reform, however, partly by means of state education departments, which, in most states, have been delegated authority over much state education policy. They also should work for reform in ways that respects the power of school districts to set their own curriculum.

We provide below a series of Action Suggestions for State Policymakers. We do so modestly, because we are keenly aware that state policymakers know their state and their business better than we do. (Indeed, we would welcome suggestions from any state policymakers about how to refine our advice.) We hope, nevertheless, that these suggestions will be useful to policymakers who wish to introduce *American Birthright* into their states—or to forward any sort of education reform.

Personnel

- **Governors should appoint Superintendents who are dedicated to the cause of social studies standards reform, and who will themselves appoint more reformers to the state education department. Governor Ron DeSantis (R-Florida) forwarded social studies standards reform by appointing Richard Corcoran as Education Commissioner, while the bipartisan Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education did likewise by appointing Dr. Cade Brumley as State Superintendent of Education.**
- **State legislators should communicate to governors that they would favor appointments of individuals who will press for social studies standards reform.**
- **Governors and state legislators should assemble lists of education reformers who will champion social studies standards reform, to be ready for appointment as Superintendents, and throughout the state education department.**

Social Studies Standards Revision

Some states have regular academic standards revision processes; others depend on legislative or gubernatorial initiative for academic standards revision.

- State policymakers should inform themselves about the particular standards revision process in their state. They should communicate with state education departments to discover what is the precise nature of the process in their state, so they may exert effective influence on the process of social studies standards revision.
- State policymakers should inform themselves about the state education department's selection of committee members to determine the revision of social studies standards. State policymakers should make sure that these committees include champions of social studies education reform, and ideally champions of *American Birthright*.
- State policymakers should inform themselves in each stage of the review process of the contents of draft revised social studies standards, keep their constituents informed about these contents, and encourage public participation and input. In 2021-2022, the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education accepted public comments throughout the social studies standard revision process. These comments from concerned citizens provided crucial support for improved social studies standards as Louisiana developed its "Freedom Framework" Content Standards. State policymakers should facilitate similar public comment in favor of *American Birthright*.
- State policymakers should communicate their preference for *American Birthright*, and similar reformed education standards that focus on Americans' shared history of liberty and republican self-government, in letters to education departments, in committees where they seek testimony from education department personnel, in public debate in the state legislature, and in public speeches. By all these means they should exert influence on state education departments, to encourage them to incorporate as much as possible of *American Birthright* into the state's revised social studies standards.
- State policymakers should use *American Birthright* particularly as a counter-model to draft social studies standards, or existing social studies standards, which do not serve their state well. They can use *American Birthright* to make critiques in detail of misguided standards—but *American Birthright* can be more effective as a counter-model as a whole. State policymakers should use *American Birthright* as a way to say, Why don't you start over entirely the process of drafting social studies standards?

- State policymakers should inform grassroots activists of occasions for public testimony on behalf of *American Birthright*. The Civics Alliance will be glad to provide testimony on behalf of *American Birthright*, but we know that such testimony is more effective when complemented by similar testimony from state citizens.
- State policymakers should be willing to initiate special means for social studies standards revision. In South Dakota, Governor Kristi Noem first [halted the regular social studies revision process and set aside the existing draft standards](#). She then [appointed a special commission](#), whose personnel largely came from outside South Dakota's education establishment. Whenever it is an appropriate means to forward social studies standards reform, state policymakers should follow Governor Noem's example.

Other Education Department Social Studies Materials and Regulations

State education departments produce a great deal of material and regulations tied to social studies standards, including model curricula, curriculum frameworks, licensure requirements, teacher training, resources, and assessments. State policymakers should follow up on work to reform social studies standards with work to ensure that all these social studies materials also have been reformed to align with *American Birthright*.

Social Studies Standards Legislation

There is as yet no precedent for introducing social studies standards themselves by statutory legislation. We would be cautious about recommending any such step, since it might limit the power of school districts to set their own curriculum. We do, however, particularly recommend to state policymakers to consider several of the Civics Alliance's model bills, from our [Model K-12 Civics Code](#). These bills, which align with *American Birthright*, would forward social studies standards reform at the level appropriate to statute law.

- [Partisanship Out of Civics Act](#). The Partisanship Out of Civics Act prevents teachers from giving credit to action civics or any other sort of public policy advocacy in history, government, civics, or social studies. It also bars civics classes from using the discriminatory ideology at the heart of Critical Race Theory.
- [Social Studies Curriculum Act](#). The Social Studies Curriculum Act mandates K-12 instruction in Economics, State History, United States History, Civics, and Western Civilization.

- [Civics Course Act](#). The Civics Course Act mandates a year-long high school civics course, including requirements to study the primary documents of the American founding and bans on action civics and the components of Critical Race Theory.
- [United States History Act](#). The United States History Act mandates a year-long high school United States History course, including requirements to study the primary documents of American history and bans on action civics and the components of Critical Race Theory.
- [Western Civilization Act](#). The Western Civilization Act mandates a year-long high school Western Civilization course, including requirements to study the primary documents of Western Civilization and bans on action civics and the components of Critical Race Theory.
- [Civics Literacy Act](#). The Civics Literacy Act requires high school students, as a condition of graduation, to pass the U.S. Civics Test given to immigrants who wish to be naturalized.
- [Historical Documents Act](#). The Historical Documents Act mandates instruction in historical documents and the liberty to use historical documents.

Teacher Training Legislation

Social studies standards reform ultimately depends upon educating a body of social studies teachers who are equipped to teach *American Birthright*. State policymakers also should work to reform their public universities and their education schools, to ensure that they will produce this body of social studies teachers. We recommend that state policymakers consider several of the Civics Alliance’s model bills, from our [Model Higher Education Code](#). These bills, which also align with *American Birthright*, would forward teacher training reform at the level appropriate to statute law.

- [School of Intellectual Freedom Act](#). The School of Intellectual Freedom Act creates an autonomous School of Intellectual Freedom (SIF) at the flagship institution of the state public university system, with the administrative autonomy that allows it to teach courses on the nature of intellectual freedom, the Western heritage, and the American heritage.
- [Core Curriculum Act](#). The Core Curriculum Act establishes general education requirements in Western and American Heritage, and removes politicized course requirements by linking standard general education requirements, a core transfer curriculum, a dual enrollment system, and a dual credit system.

- [American History Act](#). The American History Act adds an American History and Government general education requirement to public universities.
- [Heritage Certificates Act](#). The Heritage Certificates Act requires public universities to develop a Western Heritage Certificate Program and an American Heritage Certificate Program, and integrates the two Certificates into Education bachelor's degree requirements and teacher licensure requirements.

School Districts

American Birthright can and should be adopted at the school district level. State policymakers should inform school board members and school district administrators of the existence of *American Birthright*, and encourage them to adopt it.

Publicity & Cooperation With Grassroots Efforts

We recommend that state policymakers work to publicize *American Birthright* to their constituents, and to work with grassroots activists to inspire public efforts in favor of *American Birthright*. We believe that joint efforts by policymakers and the public will be more effective in promoting social studies standards reform keyed around *American Birthright*.