



Your education policy team

700 Broadway, Suite 810  
Denver, CO 80203-3442  
303.299.3600  
Fax: 303.296.8332  
E-mail: [ecs@ecs.org](mailto:ecs@ecs.org)  
[www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org)  
[@EdCommission](https://twitter.com/EdCommission)

#### ECS OFFICERS: 2015-17

##### CHAIR

Steve Bullock  
Governor  
State of Montana

##### VICE-CHAIR

Dolores Gresham  
State Senator, Tennessee

##### TREASURER

Melody Schopp  
Secretary of Education  
South Dakota Department  
of Education

##### PRESIDENT

Jeremy Anderson

## The Civics Education Initiative of 2015

This year, states are seeing a flurry of activity around civic education. This activity stems from the belief that students and young people need to be more active and engaged citizens.

In 2015, 19 states introduced legislation from the efforts of the Civics Education Initiative, a project of the Joe Foss Institute. The goal of the initiative is that all states establish the requirement that students pass a 100-question test on basic history and civic facts to graduate from high school.

Education Commission of the States examines this popular issue in a [new education trends report](#) released today.

The civics test promoted by the Civics Education Initiative is the United States Citizenship Civics Test, the same test that immigrants must pass in order to become U.S. citizens. As more states consider such legislation, fundamental questions about civic education are brought to the forefront. Should civic education mostly be concerned with factual knowledge, or should it be equally concerned with civic skills and dispositions? Ultimately, these assessments send a strong message about what in civic education is being valued.

"Those on both sides of the aisle seem to agree that students should know more about their country and community, and that they should be more invested in both," said Maria Millard, a policy analyst for Education Commission of the States and author of the report. "The means to that goal is hotly debated."

*Some important takeaways from this report:*

- Thirty-three states include civics in state assessments.
- Civics Education Initiative legislation was introduced in 19 states in 2015.
- As of June 1, 2015, legislation has passed in five states and has been defeated in five states.

*For questions, contact ECS Director of Communications Amy Skinner at [askinner@ecs.org](mailto:askinner@ecs.org) or (303) 299. 3609.*