

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Whereas basic knowledge of United States history is essential to full and informed participation in civic life and to the larger vibrancy of the American experiment in self-government;

Whereas basic knowledge of the past serves as a civic glue, binding together a diverse people into a single Nation with a common purpose;

Whereas citizens who lack knowledge of United States history will also lack an understanding and appreciation of the democratic principles that define and sustain the Nation as a free people, such as liberty, justice, tolerance, government by the consent of the governed, and equality under the law;

Whereas a recent Roper survey done for the American Council of Trustees and Alumni reveals that the next generation of American leaders and citizens is in danger of losing America's civic memory;

Whereas the Roper survey found that 81 percent of seniors at elite colleges and universities could not answer basic high school level questions concerning United States history, that scarcely more than half knew general information about American democracy and the Constitution,

and that only 22 percent could identify the source of the most famous line of the Gettysburg Address;

Whereas many of the Nation's colleges and universities no longer require United States history as a prerequisite to graduation, including 100 percent of the top institutions of higher education;

Whereas 78 percent of the Nation's top colleges and universities no longer require the study of any form of history;

Whereas America's colleges and universities are leading bellwethers of national priorities and values, setting standards for the whole of the United States' education system and sending signals to students, teachers, parents, and public schools about what every educated citizen in a democracy must know;

Whereas many of America's most distinguished historians and intellectuals have expressed alarm about the growing historical illiteracy of college and university graduates and the consequences for the Nation; and

Whereas the distinguished historians and intellectuals fear that without a common civic memory and a common understanding of the remarkable individuals, events, and ideals that have shaped the Nation, people in the United States risk losing much of what it means to be an American, as well as the ability to fulfill the fundamental responsibilities of citizens in a democracy: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives*
2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that—

3 (1) the historical illiteracy of America's college
4 and university graduates is a serious problem that

1 should be addressed by the Nation's higher edu-
2 cation community;

3 (2) boards of trustees and administrators at in-
4 stitutions of higher education in the United States
5 should review their curricula and add requirements
6 in United States history;

7 (3) State officials responsible for higher edu-
8 cation should review public college and university
9 curricula in their States and promote requirements
10 in United States history;

11 (4) parents should encourage their children to
12 select institutions of higher education with substan-
13 tial history requirements and students should take
14 courses in United States history whether required or
15 not; and

16 (5) history teachers and educators at all levels
17 should redouble their efforts to bolster the knowl-
18 edge of United States history among students of all
19 ages and to restore the vitality of America's civic
20 memory.

Passed the Senate June 30, 2000.

Attest:

Secretary.

106TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. CON. RES. 129

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress regarding the importance and value of education in United States history.