

The health empowerment zone designation would provide communities the ability to effectively access Federal programs (namely in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Small Business Administration) to improve the health or environment of minority individuals in the community and to coordinate the efforts regarding the elimination of racial and ethnic disparities in health status and health care. Special consideration is given to community that have demonstrated expertise in providing culturally appropriate and linguistically responsive services.

The bill directs communities to establish a health empowerment zone coordinating committee that will provide technical assistance and evidence-based strategies to the zone, including providing guidance on research, strategies, health outcomes, program goals, management, implementation, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation processes.

This bill recognizes that disparities in health and health care found among minority Americans have multiple causes. Lower socioeconomic status and a higher rate of uninsurance are major contributors to the health disparities experienced by minority Americans but non-health factors also play an important role.

The bill codifies legislatively the framework needed to implement sound public health practices such as:

Primary health promotion and disease prevention: Identifying and strengthening protective ecological conditions conducive to health; and identifying and reducing various health risks.

Secondary health promotion and disease prevention: Identifying, adopting, and reinforcing specific protective behaviors; and early detection and reduction of existing health problems.

Tertiary health promotion and disease prevention: Improving the quality of life of community members affected by health problems; and avoiding deterioration, reducing complications from specific disorders, and preventing relapse of risky behaviors.

This bill is a start to a new paradigm for health and I urge my colleagues to support this bill, so that we do what is so clearly needed to improve the health and health care for millions of minority Americans.

YOUTH ATTITUDES ABOUT CIVIC EDUCATION

HON. DIANA DeGETTE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Ms. DeGETTE. Mr. Speaker, at the First Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education held recently in Washington, D.C., a new report was released that deserves our highest attention and concern. The report, "Citizenship: A Challenge for All Generations," showed that young people are disengaged from the political process and lack the knowledge necessary to be effective citizens. According to the public opinion survey described in the report, more young Americans know the name of the reigning American Idol than know the political party of their state's governor.

The survey did provide a source of good news, however. It reported that courses in civics and government make a significant difference in sparking young people's interest in government and increasing their understanding of the American system of government.

Both the landmark Congressional Conference on Civic Education and this new national survey of youth civic attitudes, knowledge, and participation were products of the Representative Democracy in America Project, a new congressional initiative designed to reinvigorate Americans and educate them about the critical relationship between government and the people it serves. This national project is a collaboration among the National Conference of State Legislatures' Trust for Representative Democracy, the Center on Congress at Indiana University and the Center for Civic Education. The project, which is strictly nonpartisan, is funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress. I would like to submit for the record the executive summary of the report "Citizenship: A Challenge for All Generations."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This public opinion survey shows that young people do not understand the ideals of citizenship, they are disengaged from the political process, they lack the knowledge necessary for effective self-government, and their appreciation and support of American democracy is limited. The older generations have failed to teach the ideals of citizenship to the next generation. But there is hope. The report provides new evidence that civic education makes a big difference in the attitudes toward citizenship, knowledge and civic engagement of young people.

The report is based on a national public opinion survey designed to tap how the civic attitudes, knowledge and participation of young people—the DotNet generation between 15 and 26 years of age—compare to those of older generations. The poll was conducted by Knowledge Networks, a research firm that conducts scientifically based Internet surveys. The sampling error for the two age groups—15 to 26 and over 26—is approximately ±4 percentage points each.

The survey results reveal a breakdown in how older generations pass on the values of democracy to younger Americans, especially in the area of what it means to be a good citizen.

Here are some key findings regarding the qualities of good citizens:

Seventy-eight percent of those in the older generations say we need to pay attention to government and politics compared with 54 percent of the younger generation.

Less than half of the DotNets think that communicating with elected officials or volunteering or donating money to help others are qualities of a good citizen.

Only 66 percent of the DotNets say that voting is a necessary quality for being a good citizen, compared with 83 percent of those over age 26.

Among the DotNet generation, 64 percent report that they have taken a high school course on civics or American government. Those who have done so are much more likely to believe they are personally responsible for making things better for society and have a more expansive concept of the qualities of a good citizen. On the importance of voting, for example, there is a 24 point spread between those who have taken a government class and those who haven't.

In the area of civic engagement—the act of governing ourselves:

Only half of the DotNets reported that they voted in the most recent elections or

that they follow politics, compared to three-quarters of those over age 26.

In many areas of civic participation, two or three times more DotNets who have taken a civics class report that they have engaged in civic activities than those who have not.

On civic knowledge—the tool that enables us to govern ourselves:

Three-quarters of the older generations correctly identified the party of their state's governor and three out of five knew the Republicans control Congress. But only one-third could correctly identify the party in control of their state's legislature.

Among DotNets, eight out of 10 know that the cartoon Simpsons live in Springfield, and the great majority know that Ruben Studdard is the reigning American Idol. But less than half know the party of their state's governor, and only 40 percent can say which party controls Congress.

On attitudes toward representative democracy—our appreciation and understanding of the complexities of the legislative process:

The majority of Americans grasp the fact that people disagree on the issues and the system has to work to resolve such disagreements.

The public is cynical about the people and processes of government. They are about equally divided on whether legislators care what people in their districts think or don't care about the opinions of ordinary people. Two in five believe that those elected to public office are out to serve their own personal interests, while only one in three thinks they are trying to serve the public interest. A majority believes that the system is run by a few big interests rather than for the benefit of all.

Americans believe the country would be better off if the people decided issues directly by voting on them. Support for representative democracy is limited.

The gap between the civic attitudes, knowledge and participation of the new generation of DotNets and the older ones is substantially greater than the gaps between previous generations. It suggests that the DotNets will never be as engaged in democracy as their elders, even as they age.

Civic education makes a big difference in the attitudes, knowledge and engagement of young people. Thirty-nine states have civics or government class requirements for high school graduation. All states will want to review their civic education requirements, standards, assessments, teacher training and course content to determine if they are delivering effective civic education that produces informed citizens.

COMBATING THE SPREAD OF HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA

HON. SCOTT GARRETT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 21, 2003

Mr. GARRETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to share with this body the extraordinary work being done by a constituent company of mine, BD, the Becton, Dickinson and Company of Franklin Lakes, NJ in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

First, I would like to applaud the Senate's efforts in passing the McConnell-Sessions-Leahy amendment, as part of the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2004 that will provide funding to combat unsafe medical practices in Africa as a means to preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS on that continent.