

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 22, 2026

The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon,

We write to express our concerns following your recent launch of the History Rocks tour and the Department of Education's (the Department) related announcement that it will partner with Turning Point USA, America First Policy Institute, Hillsdale College, and more than 40 other conservative-aligned organizations in connection with the America 250 Civics Education Coalition¹. While we share your goal of enhancing civic education and preparing future generations to be informed, engaged citizens, the design and structure of this partnership raise serious questions about partisanship, constitutional limits, equity, and accountability.

The ambition to revitalize civic education across our country is laudable and urgent. According to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress scores, the average civics score at the eighth-grade level in 2022 decreased by 2 points compared to 2018². In a recent survey conducted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, more than 70% of Americans failed a basic civic literacy quiz on topics like the three branches of government, the number of Supreme Court justices, and other basic functions of our democracy³. These trends must be reversed - our democracy depends on citizens who understand their government, rights, and responsibilities- and who can engage thoughtfully and critically.

Despite these concerning trends, the public narrative around this coalition emphasizes “renewing patriotism” and “a shared understanding of America’s founding principles”⁴, without sufficient acknowledgment of historical controversies, systemic injustices, or the diversity of American experience. Such framing can easily slip into glorification or sanitization, rather than balanced inquiry.

Under the *General Education Provisions Act*, the federal government is prohibited from exercising "direction, supervision, or control over a school's curriculum, program of instruction, or administration". While your public statements assert that the coalition will not involve any federal funding, but rather coordination and support, the boundaries here are delicate. They must be managed rigorously to avoid impermissible influence. If the Department exerts influence over items such as materials, guest speaker selections, or dissemination strategies, it could be seen as steering practices that are inconsistent with the statute.

¹ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-afpi-tpusa-hillsdale-college-and-over-40-national-and-state-organizations-launch-america-250-civics-coalition>

² <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/civics/2022/>

³ <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/civics/new-study-finds-alarming-lack-of-civic-literacy-among-americans>

⁴ <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-afpi-tpusa-hillsdale-college-and-over-40-national-and-state-organizations-launch-america-250-civics-coalition>

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Despite your statement that this coalition will “ensure every young American understands the beauty of our nation and is equipped with the civic knowledge required to contribute meaningfully to our future”⁵, the Administration has proposed merging the Department’s American History and Civics (AHC) Education program into a new K–12 Simplified Funding Program for Fiscal Year 2026⁶. If successful, this would shift the discretion—and political challenge—of choosing

what programs to keep or cut to states and school districts, forcing them to prioritize between programs that range in supporting afterschool activities, students experiencing homelessness, and civics education. The AHC grants promote evidence-based instructional methods and professional development programs for K-12 students and teachers, serving more than 400,000 students and 4,000 teachers in 2024 alone. It is deeply contradictory for the Administration to publicly celebrate the “renewal of civic learning” while simultaneously dismantling the federal commitment that makes such learning possible.

The voices shaping this effort must reflect the full breadth of our nation’s civic experience. Over the past two and a half centuries, that story was expanded by generations of Americans at places like Lexington, Seneca Falls, Appomattox, Selma, and Stonewall. A proper commemoration of America’s 250th anniversary must honor that continuum – ensuring that educators, historians, civil rights advocates, veterans, faith leaders, and youth organizations from every background have a seat at the table. Only through genuine diversity of perspective can this coalition embody the inclusive, evolving democracy it seeks to celebrate.

We respectfully ask that you respond in writing to the following questions no later than Monday, February 23, 2026:

1. How will the Department define its role in the coalition? What boundaries will you impose to avoid control over curriculum or instructional decisions?
2. What mechanisms for independent review, stakeholder feedback, or revision will be built into the program?
3. What steps will be taken to guard against the insertion of partisan content or messaging into classrooms under the banner of “patriotic education”?
4. Will all educational materials, speaker contracts, event plans, and internal coalition documents be publicly posted in a timely fashion?
 - a. If so, where and in what form?
5. How will the Department ensure equitable and diverse representation of civic education stakeholders – especially organizations unaffiliated with partisan or ideological movements – in decision-making structures?
6. What outreach, if any, was made to organizations with more progressive or pluralistic approaches to civics education?

We urge you to pause further expansion of the America 250 coalition until a fully transparent, balanced, and legally sound framework is in place. We stand ready to work with you and colleagues

⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/09/17/education-department-conservative-groups-civics-patriotism/>

⁶ <https://www.ed.gov/media/document/fiscal-year-2026-budget-summary-110043.pdf>

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across the aisle to craft a genuinely inclusive, high-quality, nonpartisan national civics initiative that is consistent with democratic principles and best educational practices.

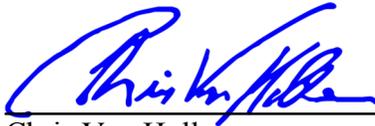
Sincerely,



Andy Kim
United States Senator



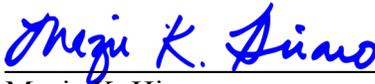
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