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Let's Get Back to Work

Why America's Schools Need Civics Classes Again

Hello, my fellow Americans. I normally don't get political in this newsletter, but there is a topic that is important to me and may be of political interest since it concerns public education. Today, I'd like to talk about the vanishing presence of civic classes in American schools.

There's been a decline in civics education in high schools for a few decades now. With the recent political events we've lived through since November, it's become clear to me that knowledge is more than power — it's the protection of our democracy. Yet, a study by the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania revealed that only 26% of Americans could name the three branches of government.

Another national survey in 2018 by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation found that only 1 in 3 Americans (36%) would pass the citizenship test. It begs the question: What is happening to our understanding of government? How do we gather a consensus about how to implement political change if we can't agree on basic facts of how our government operates?

One of the most formative classes in my life was an American civics history class during junior high. My teacher was very straightforward and told us on the first day of class, "The only opinion I'll give you in this whole school year is this: I agree with Shakespeare when he said, 'We should kill all lawyers.' Now, let's begin."

I was from a family of lawyers, and the local district attorney's daughter was also in the

class with me. I looked around, thinking: *What in the world?* His statement, which seemed to incite violence, didn't make any sense to me.

As the class went on, we quickly learned that he always lectured from notes. We never had a textbook. And, yet, he kept his promise — he expressed no other opinions in that class. He told only the facts of American civics history, from the founding of our democracy all the way to the present day. I developed detailed note-taking and listening skills during that class, because, honestly, that was the only way to pass his class!

It stuck with me as a foundation of my understanding of government all the way up to my graduate-level courses in college. Upon becoming a lawyer, I wondered about that initial opinion my junior high civics teacher had given us. I researched it, and found that in Justice John Paul Stevens' dissenting opinion in 1997 about radiation survivors, Justice Stevens used that quote from Shakespeare's "Henry the VI." The character was an anarchist who wanted to overthrow the government — so, when the character said he wanted to kill lawyers, he actually wanted to destroy the rule of law.

However, there's some debate that the true implication of the line was that Shakespeare meant it as a compliment to lawyers for upholding the rule of law. In the end, I realized my junior high civics teacher disliked lawyers, but mostly because he disliked certain personalities. He, too, deeply respected the rule of law.



Yet, we've gotten into a situation where schools and colleges don't engage with students about the importance of a civics education. Learning civics can also create an environment where students can learn to "disagree agreeably," which should occur on the most intimate of levels all the way up to the Supreme Court.

Even as progress is being made in other respects, there are those elements who seek to violently overthrow democracy to their own ends. As former Vice President Mike Pence said, there's still a lot to be done. So "let's get back to work."

— John Colvin

P.S. If you want to start teaching your kids about government (especially local government), I recommend retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's unique project iCivics.org, which has become her life's work of promoting civics education to children of all ages and backgrounds.

Do Something Better in the Garden 3 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR HARVEST

There's something beautiful about cultivating your own harvest, but you can grow more than simple backyard vegetables. Help your garden "grow up" by trying something unique this spring.

GROW FUN FOODS

We plant gardens for a purpose, so why not make it fun! Plant fresh basil, tomatoes, onions, peppers, oregano, and more to create a garden worthy of your next homemade pizza. All you will need to buy is the crust! Pumpkin plants can offer fresh gourds for any Halloween fanatic, while new species of fruits and vegetables can create an exciting home-cooking experience. Try the silver cucumber for a sweet taste or pineberries for a mix between strawberries and pineapples. You just might find a new flavor you love.

GO WITH THE FLOW

Creating a year-round garden that practically takes care of itself means using principles of permaculture, a philosophy of working with, rather than against, nature. Start by analyzing your space and yard. Determine your soil type and layer mulch or cover crops to protect it. Then, begin planting the same way that's found



in nature — trees grow at the top, shrubs and bushes are below, and other small plants and vines intermingle within. Choose crops that help each other grow (like corn, beans, and squash), and offer aid to your garden without digging up too much soil or disturbing its natural process. Permaculture gardening requires thoughtful planning, but once your crops are in place, nature will take its course.

PLANT FOR YOUR HEALTH

Mass production of your favorite fruits and vegetables reduces their key nutrients. Instead, choose fresh, home-grown varieties to yield greater health benefits. This is good news for those living with heart disease, joint disorders, or other chronic conditions. You can grow a garden chock full of nutrient-rich foods! Colorful fruits, root veggies, onions, and beans are great for joint health, while leafy greens can boost heart health. Grow pumpkins so you can harvest the seeds for better brain function, while berries can support your liver.

Before you dig into these new gardening methods, consult with an expert at a nursery or greenhouse to get the best possible results.

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When Life Gives You Lemons ... SCRUB THE MICROWAVE

Lemons don't just add a tart flavor to your favorite desserts or cool you down in a refreshing drink on a hot summer day. In addition to bold flavors, lemons also have powerful cleaning properties. Their acidity and oils cut through grease and can sanitize many of your household items.

The best place to clean with a lemon is in the kitchen. For the microwave, simply juice a whole lemon into a bowl of water, then pop the used peels into the bowl. Microwave the mixture for a few minutes, let the bowl cool before removing it, then wipe away the grease in the microwave. You can also use this method for your oven.

For odor-blocking properties, you can use a lemon as an air freshener. Leave half of a lemon in your refrigerator to trap and block potential smells and toss old lemon rinds down the garbage disposal. Run the disposal to clean the blades and freshen up the sink.

As for your kitchen tools, don't toss them out without trying this lemon trick first. Start by sprinkling salt on a wooden cutting board, then slice a lemon in half. Using half the lemon (flesh-side down) like a sponge, scrub the board really well. Wipe and remove the leftover lemon juice and rinse the board before using it again. Not only will



the board appear cleaner, but it also won't smell as bad, and the bacteria will be gone. You can also use this method to polish dining ware, spruce up copper, and even remove stuck-on food from plates.

Now, here's the real secret: Once you master kitchen cleaning a la lemon, you can use these same principles to clean other parts of your house. For example, salt and lemon can be used to scrub grimy sinks and faucets, while a few squeezes of lemon juice in a cup of water makes an excellent cleaning solution for mirrors and windows. You can even make your own reusable cleaning spray by fermenting lemon peels — and the peels of other citrus fruits — in white vinegar for two weeks. Remove the peels after two weeks and spritz the mixture over surfaces you need to clean!

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A SCAM CALL IN 2021



This past December, New Delhi police discovered two fake call centers involving over 50 people who had convinced Americans that their assets were being seized by drug cartels. The victims of this scam were told they had to transfer money, or they'd risk going to jail. The call centers duped over 8,000 Americans and made nearly \$24 million over three years.

Scam calls are a goldmine for criminals — the money transfer is only part of the profit. They can sell your information on the dark web for thousands as well. And the problem is getting worse, not better. In 2019, the scam industry was worth nearly \$667 million. With much of our lives being run virtually, that number is likely to go up.

What can you do to protect yourself? **First — especially if you don't want telemarketing calls**

to begin with — register for the National Do Not Call Registry. It's illegal for companies you haven't done business with before to solicit your phone number if you're on that registry. If you register but you still get phone calls from unknown numbers, they're likely illegal scams.

Second, there's never a good reason to pay a stranger with cash, a money-transfer app, or a gift card. Scammers don't want to be traced, and they don't want you to get your money back, which you can do easily with PayPal or your credit card. Never wire money, put money on a gift card, prepaid card, or cash reload card, or use a money-transfer app like CashApp or Venmo to pay a stranger.

Third, government agencies will never call you to confirm sensitive information, and you won't be arrested over the phone. No

matter what scenario your scammer invents, you'll never need to repeat your Social Security number or financial information to anyone over the phone. Also, a government agency will never threaten you with arrest over the phone.

Fourth, you never need to decide right away. Scammers are experts in putting pressure on you to make a purchase or decision right away. Remember: Legitimate businesses will always give you time to consider an offer.

We hope these tips help you or a loved one stay safe and make sure your life savings are exactly where they're meant to be — in your bank account. Please share this information with a friend or family member, and you might be able to protect them from a potential financial tragedy.



No More Surprise Bills! HOW THE COVID-19 RELIEF BILL HELPED REFORM MEDICAL BILLING

room visits resulted in one surprise bill — bills a patient receives from an out-of-network provider that were unexpected or that came from an out-of-network provider whom the patient did not choose. This leads to unavoidable medical debt, costing anywhere between a couple hundred to tens of thousands of dollars.

This can be shocking because it can happen even if you have health insurance. And when you're catastrophically injured, such as experiencing a life-altering medical event and requiring an airlift, the last thing you want is a surprise bill. It has driven many hardworking families into bankruptcy.

However, with the act that just passed, patients will only pay the deductibles and

copayment amounts from out-of-network providers if they are unexpectedly treated by an out-of-network provider. It fundamentally prevents patients from getting surprise bills if they're already insured.

If you want to go to an out-of-network provider, however, you can — it's voluntary legal protection, so you can sign a waiver that will allow an out-of-network provider to bill you the full amount.

So, be careful what you sign! But rest easy knowing you'll never have to experience a surprise bill again if you happen to get care from an out-of-network provider at the hospital. If you ask me, that's one of the best Christmas presents the government could have given us.

Congress has given hardworking Americans a great Christmas gift this year. After passing its 5,600-page relief bill last December, it also passed legislation that will prevent Americans from getting unexpected or surprise bills from out-of-network medical groups.

This was a big win for me and many of my clients who have been victims of surprise billing, which hardly seemed legal to begin with.

What is surprise billing exactly? A recent survey found that about 20% of emergency

Green Goddess Smoothie



If you're looking to get your green on, why not try this light smoothie?

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- 1 organic apple, peeled and chopped
- 1 medium frozen banana
- 1 1/2 cups fresh organic spinach
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1/2 medium avocado

Directions

1. In a large, high-powered blender, add in all ingredients.
2. Blend on high for 1–2 minutes, or until all ingredients are well combined.
3. If necessary, add in more almond milk to thin the smoothie.
4. Serve immediately and enjoy!

Inspired by AmbitiousKitchen.com

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0	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	7
9	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	7
1	0	0	0	0	2	7	1	0
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