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**STATEMENT ON THE NATION'S REPORT CARD:
*NAEP 2010 Civics***

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The 2010 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) civics scores are being released today, and the data reveal that civic knowledge among many of our nation's students continues to decline. More than three-quarters of high school seniors – our nation's newest voters – and nearly 80 percent of eighth graders scored below the *Proficient* level.

These students will inherit our democracy, and we must empower them to preserve it. Knowledge of our system of government is not handed down through the gene pool. The habits of citizenship must be learned, and our public schools were founded to educate students for democratic participation. The problem is that we have neglected civic education for the past several decades, and the results are predictably dismal.

The 2010 NAEP scores reveal that less than half of our eighth-grade students know the purpose of the Bill of Rights and a majority of those students cannot identify a single activity that is part of civic life. The performance of high school seniors has declined since the last NAEP assessment in 2006, and middle school civics scores have remained at the same low level since 1998.

I believe that we are at a critical point in our nation's history. We face difficult challenges at home and abroad. Meanwhile divisive rhetoric and a culture of sound bites threaten to drown out rational dialogue and debate. We cannot afford to continue to neglect the preparation of future generations for active and informed citizenship.

High quality civic education can ensure that our democracy has a vibrant and robust future. It gives students skills in critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and a common understanding of our institutions and our history. It is also the best antidote for

cynicism to help people understand that they are a part of something larger than themselves and that they can make a difference.

In some fields, great progress has been made to provide engaging and effective learning experiences for students. Civics lags behind. It receives less and less emphasis in our schools, and where it is taught, students often describe it as dry and boring.

Last year, I founded the iCivics program (at www.icivics.org) to engage students through online games and interactive resources. On this free website, students can step into the roles of government actors and can find ways to participate in real-world civic action. For teachers, we provide lesson plans and curriculum units that are aligned to standards in every state and in the District of Columbia.

Today's NAEP results confirm that we have a crisis on our hands when it comes to civic education, and that action must be taken. I believe that we can revive civic education through innovative programs like iCivics, which makes civics relevant to students' lives. To do this action must be taken to reinstate civics as a robust part of the curriculum.

We must give our nation's students the citizenship education that they deserve. Only then will we see a positive change in the NAEP results. More importantly, only then can we rest assured that "We the People" will persevere in our self-governance.