



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 5, 2018

Stupid in America: Candidates Know Little — Voters Even Less

It may shock some that socialist congressional candidate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez said unemployment is only low because everyone has two jobs and that Medicare-for-all would save money because people wouldn't die (hey, I'm definitely voting for the person who can cure death!). But don't be surprised that she'll assuredly be entering Congress. Her voters likely know even less than she does.



This is safe to say with news that only 36 percent of Americans — and only 19 percent of those under 45 — can pass a multiple-choice citizenship test. Comically but tragically, many citizens stumbled over basic questions, with some even saying that the cause of the Cold War was climate change.

The kicker is that 60 percent was the passing grade, which, for the failing two-thirds (99.9 percent of whom, I suppose, aren't reading this), means that you could get four of every 10 questions wrong and still pass.

The questions were taken from the U.S. Citizenship Test, and the survey was conducted by Lincoln Park Strategies on behalf the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. What follows are some of the bush-league errors respondents made (all quotations are from the [Washington Examiner](#)):

- “72 percent of respondents either incorrectly identified or were unsure of which states were part of the 13 original states.” No, the state of distress wasn't among them.
- “24 percent could correctly identify one thing Benjamin Franklin was famous for, with 37 percent believing he invented the lightbulb.” Hey, if you don't know even this, go [fly a kite](#).
- “12 percent incorrectly thought WWII General Dwight Eisenhower led troops in the Civil War.” Well, he [sure looked great](#) for his age as president in the '50s (the 1950s).
- “2 percent said the Cold War was caused by climate change.” Actually, it was caused by the invention of the refrigerator.

Far from the survey being an outlier, other research has demonstrated the same profound ignorance. As Professor Walter E. Williams [reported](#) in 2008, citing a number of studies (all quotations are his):

- “Only 27 percent [of Americans] know the Bill of Rights expressly prohibits establishing an official religion for the United States.”
- “25 percent [of college seniors] did not know that Columbus landed in the Western Hemisphere before the year 1500; 42 percent could not place the Civil War in the correct half-century; and 31 percent thought Reconstruction came after World War II.”
- Among the college-educated, “50 percent of whites and more than 80 percent of blacks couldn't state in writing the argument made in a newspaper column; 56 percent could not calculate the right tip.”
- Never fear though, because a survey of seniors at top liberal-arts colleges and universities found that



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 5, 2018

“98 percent could identify rap artist Snoop Dogg and Beavis and Butt-Head.” On the other hand, “only 34 percent knew George Washington was the general at the battle of Yorktown.”

Most distressingly, a civics survey Williams cited found that almost 25 percent of Americans say that Congress shares its foreign policy powers with the United Nations. If people believe such a thing, can we expect them to vigorously oppose efforts to move us closer to one-world government?

If you think “education” can remedy this ignorance, consider the findings of a 2010 Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) [national-civic-literacy report](#). As Fox News’ Dr. Richard Brake [wrote](#), “On an institutional level, ISI discovered that at many of our most elite schools, like Yale, Princeton, Duke, and my alma mater Georgetown, not only did those surveyed fail to get above a ‘D,’ seniors at these top schools did worse than freshmen on the same test, a phenomenon dubbed ‘negative learning’!”

In fact, while [summarizing](#) its 2007-2008 research, ISI tells us that, generally, the more “prestigious” a university is, the worse its students do on civics tests.

In other words, these “elite” institutions — which some students pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to attend — are ignorance mills. It’s why writer Grant Allen warned (I’m paraphrasing), “Never let your schooling interfere with your education.”

Having said this, over time the students do begin measuring up to their teachers. ISI also found that college seniors’ average score on a given civics-knowledge test was 54.2 percent — close to their professors’ average of 55 percent.

The even worse but unsurprising news is that we’re getting the government this uninformed majority deserves. Just consider the ISI findings *The New American* [related](#) in 2010. Among *politicians*:

- 79 percent didn’t know the Bill of Rights prohibits the (federal) government from establishing a religion.
- 30 percent didn’t know that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are the inalienable rights referenced in the Declaration of Independence.
- 27 percent couldn’t cite one right or freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment.
- 43 percent didn’t know the Electoral College’s purpose (hence “Hillary won the election!”).
- 39 percent of lawmakers believe the power to declare war belongs to the president.

Such ignorance is often the stuff of humor, with comedian Jay Leno, commentator Mark Dice, and others presenting hilarious “man on the street” interviews with low-info voters. For example, just watch how college students willingly signed a petition in 2015 to end women’s “suffrage” (video below), no doubt because the term sounds similar to “suffering.”

None of this is any laughing matter, however. As Williams put it, “With limited thinking abilities and knowledge of our heritage, we Americans set ourselves up as easy prey for charlatans, hustlers and quacks. If we don’t know the constitutional limits placed on Congress and the White House, politicians can do just about anything they wish to control our lives.”

For sure. As Thomas Jefferson warned, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free ... it expects what never was and never will be.”



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



Subscribe

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.