

March 11, 2015

To: The Honorable Representative Margaret Doherty, Chair
Representative Lew Frederick, Vice Chair
Representative Sherrie Sprenger, Vice-Chair
Representative Greg Barreto
Representative Jodi Hack
Representative Susan McLain
Representative Carla Piluso
Representative Jeff Reardon
Representative Carl Wilson

Re: Support for HB 2955, Increased Civic Education for Teachers

Ms. Chair and Members of the Committee:

As eighth graders at West Sylvan Middle School, we encourage you to support House Bill 2955, which will increase civic education for teachers.

We have been the students of Ms. Rouse for the last two years. In that time we have spent much more time learning about civics, government and politics than our peers in other classes. We have done many extra units and activities, including a unit on the 2014 election and what it means to be an informed voter, a mock trial, and a unit on the forms of government and its role and our responsibilities in our democracy. We have also been studying the constitution and the Declaration of Independence from our We The People textbooks. We have learned concepts such as our Natural Rights, Civic Virtue, Separation of Powers, and the common good. While other classes in our school have access to this valuable resource, there are schools and students in Oregon who are not as lucky. We are fortunate to have a teacher who is thoroughly educated on how to teach students civics and how it relates to our society. Madeline has recently been accepted to be an honorary page under Representative Mitch Greenlick, and she would have never thought to have looked for an opportunity like that without Ms. Rouse's teaching.

The past two years have been informative and enriching as Ms. Rouse prepares us to become the responsible citizens that we will need to be one day. We can speak for all our classmates when we say that we have also had a lot of fun during this experience. We are proud to say that we understand civics and politics better than our parents do, and it wouldn't have been without this fabulous opportunity! But this isn't just about having a deeper understanding than our parents about our government, it's about our future and the future of others. When we become eligible to vote we will have a choice about candidates and ballot measures that will not only affect our futures, but those of the people

who can't vote. It is because of this that we need to be educated voters, knowing where to find valid information and how to decipher biased campaigns. What better time to learn this than at a resilient young age where one is still forming one's opinions?

We realise that you have many bills that you have to fund, but HB2955 is the future of our country! Learning civics in the classroom prepares us for the world of voting and politics. In order for our generation to become the informed voters that we need to be to make decisions that benefit the common good, we have to be taught the basics, and what better time to do that than now?

When asked what kind of government was made, Benjamin Franklin once said, "A republic, if you can keep it." How else will citizens be able to keep our republic, unless they know what we are protecting? But with the funding of House Bill 2955, we will be able to create an educated future for Oregon and the United States!

Sincerely,



Madeline Gochee
Student, West Sylvan Middle School



Jessica Motley
Student, West Sylvan Middle School

3537 Nw Chapin Dr
Portland, OR 97229
503-410-4054

1505 NW Morgan Ln
Portland, OR 97229
503-488-5664