

Grants to Arizona Group and 11 Other State Coalitions to Boost Civic Mission of Schools

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Washington, D.C. (September 13, 2004) – Twelve grants to promote civic learning in the public schools were announced today by the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools. The \$20,000 grants are going to coalitions in the following states: Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Illinois, Louisiana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

The Campaign is a major national initiative to renew and restore a core purpose of public education – preparing America’s young people to be informed and active citizens in our democracy. It is funded by Carnegie Corporation of New York and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and managed by the Council for Excellence in Government in partnership with the Academy for Educational Development. The Campaign endorses a comprehensive approach to civic learning, with schools not only being places where young people acquire knowledge but where they also are exposed to all facets of citizenship through experiential activities that instill civic knowledge, skill, and behavior.

The grants were awarded through a rigorous national competition, with the twelve winning coalitions selected from 39 state proposals. Each grant covers a two-year period beginning in November and will help support the work of state-level coalitions organized to advance the cause of civic learning.

"Today's students must experience, debate, understand and argue about what it means to be a citizen. There is no better place to transmit the ideas – and the challenges – inherent in our democracy than in school," said Vartan Gregorian, president of Carnegie Corporation of New York. "The work to be done in the states chosen for these grants will not only revitalize the teaching of our democratic principles, but strengthen them as well."

Knight Foundation president and CEO Hodding Carter III voiced his support of the campaign. "We are convinced that we need to reknit the strands tying together the republic’s civic life," he said. "That means we must be about the business of encouraging and supporting citizenship education, beginning in grammar schools and progressing straight through secondary and higher education."

"This is a milestone for a Campaign that’s only six months old," David Skaggs, Executive Director of the Campaign and former Congressman from Colorado, said in announcing the grants. "We are eager for these state coalitions to show what can be done to restore civic learning to a central place in our schools."

The twelve state coalitions consist of a wide range of civic and professional organizations, educators, government officials, youth service organizations, philanthropies, media and corporations. The grant selection criteria specifically encouraged broadly based coalitions to apply. (Attachment 1 lists the successful grantees, their coalitions, and a brief description of the goal and approach planned in each state.)

In Arizona, the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education leads a coalition of Arizona organizations and individuals who support civic education. The Arizona Civics Coalition with support from this grant and local funders will develop a statewide grassroots effort in support of comprehensive civic education for students aligned with the Civic Mission of Schools report’s six

promising approaches. The Arizona Civics Coalition expects to:

- 1) establish a sustainable coalition to encourage civic education dialogue and coordinate existing youth civic education and civic engagement programs throughout Arizona,
- 2) conduct an Arizona Civic Index survey of current public perceptions about civic education and existing public will and
- 3) reach out to the media, the legislature, schools and the public to promote civic education in general and specific policy objectives.

The Campaign's focus on improving policy and practice affecting civic learning at the state and local level reflects the fact that most educational policy is made and most resources are provided at that level. In August, the Campaign announced \$150,000 grants to state coalitions in Colorado, Maine, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. It will also pursue support for the civic mission of schools at the national level, working with Congress, the Administration and various national organizations.

The Campaign's work is grounded in the Civic Mission of Schools report (February 2003, civicmissionofschools.org) and is guided by a Steering Committee composed of representatives from some 40 national organizations active in the field. These organizations have a variety of missions and emphases but are working collaboratively to develop a richer, comprehensive approach to civic learning. (Attachment 2 is a roster of the Steering Committee.)

The **Council for Excellence in Government** (www.excelgov.org) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization in Washington, D.C. The Council's mission is to improve understanding of, participation in, and performance of our government and representative democracy. The Academy for Educational Development (www.aed.org) is a leading human and social development organization. It operates more than 250 programs in all 50 states and 80 countries to help people improve their lives through better education, health, and economic opportunities.

The **Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education** (AZFLS&E) plays a leading role in providing access to justice in Arizona. The Foundation reaches more than 200,000 children annually by training teachers, school resource officers and probation officers about our laws, justice system and the foundations of democracy. The Foundation also awards nearly \$2 million in grants to more than 20 non-profit organizations providing legal services to those in need, so all people in Arizona can have a voice in our justice system.