



## One in Three Americans Fail Immigrant Naturalization Civics Test

*Xavier University's Center for the Study of the American Dream Shows as Americans Prepare to Exercise Civic Duty This Fall, Too Many Remain Uninformed.*

**CINCINNATI, April 27, 2012** /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ A new national survey from Xavier University's Center for the Study of the American Dream reveals one in three native-born citizens failed the civics portion of the naturalization test, in stark contrast to the 97.5 percent pass rate among immigrants applying for citizenship.

Passing means answering 6 out of 10 questions correctly. If the pass rate were 7 out of 10, one half of native-born Americans would fail.

The Center's nationwide survey tested adult Americans on 10 random questions taken directly from the naturalization test. In a concurrent survey, the Center found that 77 percent of native-born citizens agreed that all Americans should be able to pass the test. Furthermore, 60 percent agreed that high school students should have to pass the naturalization test as a requirement for graduation.

The Center's research persistently shows a strong distrust of our public institutions, particularly government and our political leaders, yet 59 percent of survey respondents could not name one power of the federal government, 77 percent could not name one power of the states, and 62 percent could not name the Governor of their state.

"Civic illiteracy threatens the American Dream because it threatens the freedoms we treasure. Civic illiteracy makes us more susceptible to manipulation and abuses of power," said Michael Ford, the Center's Founding Director.

The survey found that native-born citizens do best with elementary school level questions such as: "What is the name of the President of the United States?", "What is the capital of the United States?", "Where is the Statue of Liberty?", "Who was the first President?", "When do we celebrate Independence Day?", and "What are the two major political parties in the United States?". However, the highest incorrect scores consistently concern the US Constitution, and the governmental, legal and political structure of the American republic and basic facts related to current political life and identification of key political decision-makers.

For example, when asked questions about our government and political leaders, the survey results found:

- 85 percent did not know the meaning of the "the rule of law."
- 82 percent could not name "two rights stated in the Declaration of Independence."
- 75 percent were not able to correctly answer "What does the judiciary branch do?"
- 71 percent were unable to identify the Constitution as the "supreme law of the land."
- 68 percent did not know how many justices are on the Supreme Court.
- 63 percent could not name one of their two US Senators.
- 62 percent could not identify "What happened at the Constitutional Convention?"
- 62 percent could not answer "the name of the Speaker of the US House."

"We certainly don't expect everyone to know all the answers. For example, does it matter if we don't know how many amendments there are? No. But almost 60 percent don't even know what an amendment is," explained Ford.

The survey results did reveal a deep division among education levels. Only 44% of respondents with a high school education or less passed in contrast with an 82% pass rate among college graduates – a 38 percent gap. Compared to the immigrant passage rate of 97.5 percent, college graduates underperform by 15 percent, while high school graduates underperform by 53 percent. The numbers were consistent among red states and blue states.

"The issue is not about sensationalizing who passed and who failed. It's about what vote-eligible Americans specifically know and do not know in the midst of an important presidential election, after 12-18 years of school and 24/7 exposure to unfiltered multi-media," explained Ford.

About the survey: From February 29-March 11, 2012, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz and Associates (FM3) conducted telephone interviews with 1,023 native born U.S. citizens age 18 and older using a Random-Digit Dial sample of landlines and cell phones. The margin of error for the sample is +/-3.1 percent. The methodology was designed to replicate the U.S. Citizen and Immigrations Services civics examination.

*For more information about the survey, or to view the Executive Summary, log onto Xavier University's Center for the Study of the American Dream site. Follow the Center on Twitter for up-to-date information and new survey data each month: @XUAmericanDream and "Like" the Center's Facebook page.*

*Xavier University ([www.xavier.edu](http://www.xavier.edu)) is a private university located in Cincinnati, Ohio, providing a liberal arts education in the Jesuit Catholic tradition. Founded in 1831, the university is the sixth-oldest Catholic university in the nation. U.S. News & World Report ranks it No. 4 among master's-level universities in the Midwest, and The Princeton Review names it as one of the "Best 376 Colleges in America."*

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