

August 31, 2020

Ms. Mary Beth Kurzak  
Executive Director  
The Foundation of the International Association of Defense Counsel  
303 West Madison, Suite 925  
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Ms. Kurzak,

The IADC Foundation's most recent donation of \$25,000 to iCivics brings the Foundation's total financial support to \$326,000 over the last eight years. That on-going and generous support counts the Foundation as one of the earliest, most critical and most reliable contributors to iCivics' important work. Specifically, as one of iCivics' first pivotal investors, the Foundation's support has contributed significantly to our exponential growth over the last decade.

Over the years, iCivics has built an impressive bilateral and mutually reinforcing engine – providing quality, accessible, proven-effective civic education resources at scale, while coalescing and leading a diverse and intensifying movement for systemic change.

## **iCivics is now the largest and most trusted provider of civic educational resources in the nation.**

Over the last eight years, iCivics has grown its reach from less than one million to more than **7.6 million** students per year, in all 50 states. Over half of students in middle school and high school have used iCivics. Our resources are used by more than 120,000 active teachers, and our games have been played more than 100 million times. In recent years, our average annual student reach growth rate has been 30%, and we expect to reach up to 9 million over the next school year (+20%). According to our annual survey of more than 2,000 iCivics teacher-uses, even in these polarized times, an astonishing 95% of teachers said that iCivics is a trusted and non-partisan resource, which fosters civil conversations about current events in their classrooms.



**We are also seizing on unprecedented momentum for the cause of civic education to make lasting, substantive progress.**



Research by the Bush Institute, Biden Center and Freedom House found that while Americans agree on very little in these polarized times, they agree overwhelmingly on one thing: **80% of Americans are worried about the health of our democracy and nearly 90% support greater access to civic education.**<sup>1</sup> iCivics has long understood that our mission is dual-fold: it is not enough to develop high quality, accessible and engaging resources, we must also build demand for those resources. That requires systemic change.

As an established leader in the field, iCivics seized this moment and took the initiative to coalesce diverse leaders and policy makers in the field under a new national, non-partisan coalition called [CivXNow](#) to work in concert toward a unified goal of national civic education revitalization. Led by iCivics, CivXNow is now comprised of over [133 member organizations](#) committed to helping every school in the nation fulfill its historic and vital civic mission. Members include some of the very largest national organizations such as the League of Women Voters and the Girl Scouts of America. CivXNow focuses on field building and state and federal policy advocacy, while iCivics focuses on providing free curriculum and professional development resources to educators.

**Our ambitious, next-phase strategic plan builds from the assets we have developed to secure a healthy American democracy.**



We have developed a comprehensive, [next-phase, 5-year strategic plan](#) with the goal of securing a healthy American democracy by the time we celebrate our Semiquincentennial anniversary in 2026. By then, we will have achieved the mind-shift change needed, and we will have put in place new and more rigorous policies to ensure quality civic education in 20

states. We will provide even more relevant and engaging resources for high quality education. And we will have demonstrated what systems-wide quality civic education looks like to deliver results.

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**I am pleased to share with you the great progress your support has made possible over the past year, as well as our ambitious plans for the years to come.**

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<sup>1</sup> [The Democracy Project](#): A national survey jointly commissioned by Freedom House, the George W. Bush Institute, and the Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement examining American attitudes toward democracy (June, 2018)

## We continue to expand our reach and deepen our impact.

Over the last year, teachers – and parents – flocked to iCivics at record numbers yet again. Last year, we reported that we had expanded our reach to 6.2 million students nationwide. **We are now reaching 7.6 million each year** (the majority of middle and high school students). While we were expecting significant growth in this high profile election year, we have also pivoted to respond to urgent needs for both remote learning support, as well as guidance to facilitate meaningful discussion of complex and contentious current events (see ‘Responding to the challenges of our times’ below).

### iCivics saw significant growth across every key performance indicator:

Key Performance Metrics	2020	2019	Annual % Increase
 Students reached	7.6 M	6.2 M	↑ 22%
 Game plays	21.4 M	20.1 M	↑ 7%
 Site visits	16.7 M	13.5 M	↑ 24%
 Resource downloads	1.8 M	1.3 M	↑ 32%
 Active teachers	121,226	99,516	↑ 22%
 New teachers recruited	73,560	57,716.00	↑ 27%
 New parent registrants*	5,163	1,227	↑ 321%

\*2020 YTD measure compared to full 2019 calendar year

### Growing our resources by relevance and depth:



Over the last year, we continued our initiative to update the content, functionality, and technology of all of our existing games, as well as adding new supports and Spanish translation for our nation’s 4.9 million English Language Learners and struggling readers. We updated an additional six of our most popular games (detailed below). We were also proud to have our games honored with a gold medal from the *2020 International Serious Play*

*Awards* (for Win the White House), as well as recognition by *Common Sense Media* and the *Play Make Learn Conference* (for Race to Ratify).

## Our six new and improved games were played 9.7 million times last year:



**Cast Your Vote/i A Votar!**: Students discover what it takes to become an informed voter — from knowing where you stand on important issues to uncovering what you need to know about candidates.

**Win the White House /Camino a la Casa Blanca**: In our most popular game, students are challenged to build a campaign in a simulated presidential election including strategic messaging, media and polling.

**Argument Wars/Guerra de Argumentos**: Students hone their persuasive abilities by arguing real seminal Supreme Court cases against opposing counsel. Whoever uses the strongest arguments wins!

**Branches of Power/Los Tres Poderes**: Students do something that no one else can: control all three branches of the U.S government to understand the powers and limitations of each.

**Court Quest/Trayecto Tribunal**: Students explore state and federal courts as the *Judicial Express* guides their path through the American judicial system.

**Lawcraft/Taller de Leyes**: Students step into the role of a member of the US House of Representatives to navigate the law making process from constituent concerns to a law they can be proud of.

## Just-in-time lessons:

In addition to updating and expanding our core resources, we also develop and curate timely resources to help educators help their students make sense of complex civic concepts and events – from historic milestones to current events. Over the last year, we have developed resources, discussion guides, and suggested activities for teachers, including on topics such as *Plug into the Power of the Census*, *Voting by Mail*, *Campaign Cash*, *Shedding Light on a State of Emergency* (updated for COVID-19), *A Movement in the Right Direction* (in celebration of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment), and *Impeachment and Conviction*, which was featured in the [Washington Post](#).

## Responding to the challenges of our times

### Remote learning toolkit



In spring of 2020, nationwide school closures caused an urgent crisis in education. Fortunately, iCivics was uniquely positioned to answer this call. Our platform is already free and digital, non-partisan, comprehensive, and trusted. We are specialists in online learning. Our team quickly shifted gears: re-deploying resources to benefit the emerging needs of millions of teachers, parents, and students. The result: our newly launched



[remote learning toolkit](#) with curated and adapted resources, activities, and supports to facilitate meaningful home learning. Over the last few months of the school year, the number of new teachers registering with iCivics almost doubled compared to the same time period last year, and the number of registered parents more than doubled. *We continue to monitor and respond to the evolving needs of educators and families during this period of ongoing uncertainty.*

## iCivics Election 2020 HQ

This election was always going to be hard fought and high profile, long before the extraordinary events of recent months. *Civics is not merely learned, it's lived.* This historic election year offers unprecedented opportunities for deep civic learning, as well as vital civic and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills development including constructive, fact-based debate and discussion of candidates and issues, reasoning and argumentation, and news media literacy. Yet, in these intensely polarized times, teachers are seeking support and guidance as never before.



iCivics' **2020 Election HQ** is a one-stop-election-shop for educators and students, including both existing and updated resources like *Election Night Tracker*, *Candidate Report Card* and *Mock Election* lessons, and relevant games like [Cast Your Vote](#), [Win the White House](#), [Executive Command](#) and [NewsFeed Defenders](#). We will also offer suggested lessons, new activities and free topical webinars, such as our new [2020 Candidate Bios](#), encouraging students to compare and contrast candidates across key categories.

## Roadmap for teaching controversial topics



Today's extreme political polarization and strident public discourse undercut meaningful debate about the pressing challenges we face. Not surprisingly, most U.S. teachers have seen this trend reflected in increasingly divided classrooms. Yet, with the right guidance, classrooms can be safe places for students to test drive their ideas and see disagreement as an opportunity to learn. Tackling today's controversies allows students to develop their own views and engage in civil discourse while discussing the issues that dominate public attention.

To help teachers bring controversial topics into their classroom, we've designed five Teacher Guides and a series of videos that address the challenges and concerns teachers face when thinking about teaching controversial topics.

## Building a thriving democracy

### A Plan for Equitable Civic Education X 2026



As always, our ultimate goal is to make high-quality and equitable civic education a centerpiece of modern education nationwide. If civic education is to be a solution to what ails our constitutional democracy, we must ensure it becomes a priority for our nation. Last year, we shared with you the broad vision for our ambitious, next-phase strategic plan. In May 2020, iCivics' Board of Directors formally adopted that [plan](#), which aims to build from the assets we have developed as both the nation's leading provider of civic education resources, as well as a leader in the field to secure a healthy American democracy.

By the time we celebrate our nation's Semiquincentennial anniversary in 2026, we will have achieved the mind-shift change needed, and we will have put in place new and more rigorous policies to ensure quality civic education in 20 states. We will provide even more relevant and engaging resources for high quality education. And we will have demonstrated what systems-wide quality civic education looks like to deliver results.

### Putting equity at the core of civic education

**Equity is at the core of that plan** and drives every facet of our work. Over the last year, we have undertaken the process of developing and implementing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy and curriculum plan to guide our efforts to update existing and create new resources to ensure we're providing topical, relevant content that addresses issues of marginalization and equity.

"We must to continue to elevate student voice in the fight for equity in civic education because education has the power to change the world." – Equity Youth Fellow  
Caleb Dunson Chicago



We also welcomed our first inaugural **youth fellowship program** as part of a collaborative effort with [Generation Citizen](#), to explore equity in civic education. The 12 selected high school students leveraged their unique civic experiences to shed light on the ways in which civic education, civic engagement platforms, and civic institutions can create more inclusive spaces. As student ambassadors for equity in civics, Fellows engaged in rich discussion and explored the pressing issues facing our nation, while adding necessary youth voice, perspectives, and talents to the CivXNow movement. Fellows had the opportunity to engage with experts in the fields of civics, education, policy, and media and represent CivXNow on panels and

at events throughout the country. Fellows shared their views with the media as well, including a recent [article](#) in the Chicago Tribune by Fellow Caleb Dunson from Chicago (quoted above). We look forward to welcoming our next class this year.

### Progress leading a movement

- The CivXNow coalition grew from 111 to 135 members (+21%), with a goal of reaching 250 by 2026.
- The CivXNow State Policy Task Force now comprises 31 members from 19 states. Last year, the Coalition released a state policy menu with options to strengthen quality civic learning based on successful models in other states with plans to hold a convening of state leaders in 2021. Those success stories were catalogued in a series of case studies, including [Massachusetts](#), [Illinois](#), and a [documentary](#) about Chicago Public Schools' Democracy Schools Initiative.
- Within the last year, we helped launch the **Texas Civic Education Coalition**, which has already grown to 100 members and is working toward a more robust civic education mandate in the next legislative session.
- As part of that collaborative work, in late 2019, the **National Endowment for Humanities** tasked iCivics, along with partners at **Harvard Arizona State and Tufts Universities**, to lead a coalition of experts in assessing the state of, and best practices in, the teaching of American history, civics, and government in K-12 education. Titled *Educating for American Democracy: A Roadmap for Excellence in History and Civics Education for All Learners*, this initiative is bringing together more than 100 leading academics and practitioners in education, civics, history, and political science. The group will soon issue their roadmap that will outline for teachers, schools, and district and state policy-makers high-priority civics content areas, and recommend instructional strategies and best practices for integrating the teaching of civics and history at every grade level.

### Where we will go with your continued support.

To raise moral, literate, and productive citizens is at the heart of why American public schools were created. It matters that young people know our branches of government, their roles, and why they exist in the first place. It matters that young people know how to discuss and deliberate, reflect and ponder, argue and engage with one another... with civility. It matters that young people feel that they, too, have a voice in our shared government. **Thank you for believing in and supporting our cause.**

Our vision is bold, ambitious, and *possible*. We are profoundly grateful for your support. I hope you feel confident in the return your investment had delivered, and you will consider renewing your support this year, helping us add millions more informed and engaged voters, active citizens, political candidates and civic-minded leaders.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Dubé'.

Louise Dubé  
Executive Director, iCivics