



SENATE BILL 1071 TESTIMONY

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Jonathan Parker. I am with the firm of Holland & Hart and I am here today representing my client, the Joe Foss Institute, in support of support of Senate Bill 1071.

The Joe Foss Institute was established with the purpose of educating our youth on the importance of America's unique freedoms and to inspire them to public service. Joe Foss was a recipient of the Medal of Honor recognizing his service as leading fighter ace in World War II. In postwar years, he served as a General in the Air National Guard, the 20th Governor of South Dakota, President of the National Rifle Association, and the first commissioner of the American Football League.

The Joe Foss Institute's Civics Education Initiative's national board of advisors include US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Journalist Carl Bernstein, as well as advisory board members Tom Brokaw, Don Shula, Lt. Col. Oliver North, Senator John Glenn, John Elway, and many others. The Civics Education Initiative has been active in supporting similar legislation such as Senate Bill 1071 across the nation.

In an effort to further their mission, the Joe Foss Institute commissioned a nationwide poll in 2014 that concluded that 74% of voters support requiring high school students, as a condition for graduation, to pass a test on 100 basic facts of US history and civics, from the United States Citizenship Civics Test – the same test all new citizens must pass. The poll also showed that every demographic group, regardless of party affiliation, shows support at or above 60%.

Here in Idaho, we have seen statewide support for such an initiative through calls, emails, as well as editorial board endorsements across the state, including the Coeur d'Alene Press, Magic Valley News, Idaho Press Tribune, and the Idaho Statesman. In fact, the Idaho Statesman wrote that, and I quote: "only 38 percent of eligible Idahoans voted in November (the first time it dipped below 40 percent) – we need a multifaceted strategy to re-energize

our state and country about civic engagement. We need a civics renaissance.” Additionally, the USA Today editorial board endorsed the idea earlier this month following the passage of similar legislation in North Dakota and Arizona.

In conclusion, it was our nation’s ^{third}~~second~~ President and the drafter of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, who said that “if a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.” Additionally, James Madison, considered to be the father of our Constitution, wrote that “a popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce, or a tragedy, or perhaps both.”

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, we request your vote today in support of Senate Bill 1071. Additionally, and behalf of myself, I ask for your vote in support of Senate Bill 1071, because going back to my first legislative session in 2005, I can’t recall a single piece of legislation that I am more proud to support as this one. Senate Bill 1071 is a good bill and we ask for your support.

Thank you