

# Ignorant Americans can be manipulated

Written by  
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Unbalance in America feeds off ignorance. Don't focus on high school dropouts or illiterate adults. Think mainstream America.

Last March, Newsweek gave 1,000 Americans the U.S. Citizenship Test. When 38 percent failed, the magazine proclaimed, "The country's future is imperiled by our ignorance."

Most Americans are ignorant of what Thomas Jefferson called "the essential principles of our government," those principles that make America special and keep it free, that should be "the text of civic instruction."

Our "civic instruction" has problems.

The national education assessment published by the U.S. Department of Education shows students know little U.S. History.

Laugh at Jay Leno's "Jaywalking" series. But they show adults, some well educated, who don't know the words to the National Anthem or why we celebrate Independence Day, much less the "essential principles of our government."

"Democracy demands an informed electorate," says a policy analysis published by the Cato Institute. "Voters who lack sufficient knowledge may be manipulated" by opinion leaders who "have strong incentives to exaggerate the importance of political problems."

Knowing what some well-paid commentator touted as the latest cause on Fox News, MSNBC, or talk radio is not the same as being informed.

Don't count on politicians' "talking points" or your favorite blogs, tweets, or websites either.

"The greatest tyrannies are always perpetrated in the name of the noblest causes," warned Thomas Paine.

Ignorance allows people to be led by the nose, down the garden path, like cows to slaughter. Without knowledge we have no context to weigh "causes" or strong arguments against. We become ready prey to those seeking power.

"If we are to guard against ignorance and remain free, as Jefferson cautioned, it is the responsibility of every American to be informed," said Ronald Reagan.

Do you remember this?

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Or this?

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

You might be surprised how many Americans do not recognize the Preamble to the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence.

Read "The Federalist Papers," our "Bill of Rights," or texts like Frank Magruder's "American Government." Teach yourself, your children, and

your grandchildren the essential principles of American government or risk the continued unbalance ignorance brings.

"It is in the region of ignorance that tyranny begins," said Ben Franklin.

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