



YANKEE POST

Spring 2026 Edition



Presidents Message:

In my last message, we celebrated the success of our annual CCSS conference. Since then, much has been accomplished, including our participation in the National Council for the Social Studies Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., which was held under the theme, “Because Democracy Depends on It.”

This was my first NCSS conference, and I was genuinely struck by the scope of professional learning opportunities and the connections forged in just a few short days. Representing CCSS at this event was a particular honor, especially as we were recognized as a Gold Status affiliate for the breadth of work our council carries out throughout the year, along with additional recognition for excellence in advocacy and governance. These awards belong to our board and members. CCSS is an entirely volunteer organization, and yet our board members consistently go above and beyond to advance and advocate for social studies education across Connecticut. The national recognition we received is a reflection of your work, your commitment, and your belief that this discipline matters.

Among the many enriching sessions, one of my personal highlights was hearing Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson speak. Rather than focusing on the inner workings of the Court, she reflected on her path to the bench, the mentors who shaped her, and the historical figures who inspired her journey. One of her heroes was Constance Baker Motley of New Haven, the first Black woman to argue a case before the Supreme Court and later serve as a federal judge. Hearing her lift up a figure with roots in our own state was a powerful reminder that the stories we teach in Connecticut classrooms are part of a much larger American narrative still unfolding.

As February began, I worked with my department to honor the 100th anniversary of Carter G. Woodson's vision for Black History Month, I kept that idea in mind. Place based learning has the power to spark curiosity and pride by anchoring national stories to the very streets our students walk each day. My own school in New Haven sits just steps from the proposed site of the "College of 1831," an early effort to establish what would have been the first HBCU in the United States. When students realize that national history unfolded in their own community, it transforms how they see themselves and their role in the American story.

That same place based lens deepens our understanding as we reflect on the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. The Black experience in the Revolution was complex, courageous, and often overlooked. More than 800 Black residents of Connecticut joined the Patriot cause, with documented ties to 80 of our 169 towns. Others sought liberty by escaping enslavement and joining the British in response to promises of freedom.

A recent visit to the Connecticut Museum of Culture and History brought this complexity into sharper focus. In their collections, military records sit alongside petitions, runaway advertisements, and personal documents that reveal both service in the Continental ranks and acts of self liberation. Standing before those primary sources is a powerful reminder that the founding era was not experienced in a single way. For Black men and women in Connecticut, the Revolution presented both risk and possibility, oppression and opportunity. When we bring these local records into our classrooms, we move beyond simplified narratives and invite students to wrestle with the full human dimension of our nation's beginnings.

The beauty of our new state standards is that they allow these stories to be woven throughout the curriculum, not confined to a single month. They create space for diverse experiences to be integrated year round, ensuring that all students see themselves reflected in both American and world history.

As always, I am grateful for our members and partners. Classroom teachers, district leaders, museums, universities, and community organizations continue to collaborate in ways that strengthen our collective impact. Thank you to our community partners across Connecticut who open archives, share expertise, and work alongside educators to bring history to life. When we share resources, co-create curriculum, and support one another, our students benefit.

Thank you for the work you do each day to ensure that democracy does, indeed, depend on informed and engaged learners.

Maxwell Comando
President, Connecticut Council for the Social Studies



Celebrate Excellence.

2026 Social Studies Awards

Award Categories:

- Elementary, middle, and high school
- Administrators
- Pre-Service Social Studies Teachers
- Special Projects
- “Friends of the Social Studies”



Nominations Due: 3/13/2026

Preservice Teacher Award Due: 3/27

Criteria & Forms:

ctsosocialstudies.org/Awards_Info



Get Civically Involved:

Join the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies Today! Help us to promote the study of social studies across the state. This [link](#) will take you to the membership page where you have the option of joining online, or printing out a hardcopy form to complete and mail in.



Stephen Armstrong

FROM THE EDITORS' DESKS



LéAnn Murphy Cassidy

TEACHING AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TODAY

By: *Stephen Armstrong*

Colleagues: we are in a very dangerous time, both in our country and in the profession of teaching civics/social studies. There are things going on in the government that I would never dream that I would see. Norms are being destroyed on a daily basis. The very structure of government and society are being attacked. From my perspective, if we don't think we are in a crisis in the United States we are deluding ourselves.

How is this impacting the teaching of social studies? I know there are teachers that are intentionally avoiding the teaching of "current events". There are teachers that are teaching the branches of government, checks and balances, etc. as if nothing has changed. Some say they still want to teach the "ideals" of American government. Others are afraid of student/parent/administrative blowback to what they are teaching. Others say they don't want to have classroom discussions because they are afraid that they will get out of control.

I completely sympathize with these viewpoints. However, in my opinion it is too late for all of that. America is in a crisis situation, and it is the job of the social studies teacher to assist students in navigating critical issues. I am not asking teachers to give their own political views in the classroom, or to run discussions that might "go crazy". On numerous topics good teachers create effective classroom activities all the time on controversial issues: why can't we do the same on the presidency of Donald Trump? Students need assistance in understanding what is going on in America today. Immigrants, ICE agents, rising prices, etc. all greatly impact many of them. If they cannot learn the background of these problems in a social studies classroom, where are they going to get their information? Teachers bemoan the impact of social media on their students: if we are going to be silent on contemporary issues aren't we giving social media more as a forum than it already has? We owe it to our students to help them navigate the issues of today. Please be up to the task.

For additional reading:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/01/learning/lesson-plans/president-trump-and-the-constitution-5-critical-issues-to-explore-with-students.html>

Stephen Armstrong
Past President, National Council for the Social Studies

Teaching History in a Time of Retreat from Women's Rights

by *LéAnn Murphy Cassidy*

To teach history in classrooms across the United States today is to confront a growing contradiction. We ask educators to prepare students for informed citizenship in a democratic society while simultaneously narrowing the scope of whose stories are permitted to be told. Nowhere is this tension more apparent than in the teaching of women's rights and women's leadership.

History is not merely a record of past events; it is a framework through which societies define values, assign legitimacy, and imagine the future. When women's rights are curtailed in law and women's contributions are minimized in curricula, students receive a distorted understanding of both the past and the present. These are not abstract academic concerns. They shape civic identity and democratic participation.

Public debate has recently focused on reproductive rights, particularly following shifts in federal constitutional protections. While reproductive autonomy is an essential component of women's rights, teaching history requires a broader lens. Women's rights encompass access to healthcare, economic opportunity, legal protection, freedom from violence, political participation, and recognition as leaders in public life. These rights have been neither automatic nor inevitable; they were secured through sustained struggle, advocacy, and institutional change. Omitting this context undermines historical accuracy.

In history classrooms, the erosion of women's rights is mirrored by efforts to limit how gender equity and women's experiences are taught. Restrictions on curriculum, the removal of instructional materials, and the framing of women's history as "supplemental" rather than foundational contribute to a narrative in which women appear peripheral to national development. This erasure misrepresents the historical record. Women were central to labor movements, civil rights activism, wartime production, scientific advancement, and democratic reform. Teaching otherwise is not neutrality; it is omission.

The marginalization of women's leadership is especially evident in the teaching of military and national history. Women have served in the United States military since the nation's founding as nurses, intelligence operatives, pilots, engineers, commanders, and combat leaders. Yet their service is often presented as exceptional rather than integral. When women's military leadership is minimized or excluded, students absorb the implicit message that authority and service are inherently gendered. This not only distorts history but reinforces contemporary barriers to women's leadership in national security and public service.

The consequences extend beyond content knowledge. When students are taught a version of history that downplays women's agency, they learn to view rights as conditional and leadership as restricted. This undermines democratic education. A functioning democracy depends on citizens who understand that rights expand through participation and accountability not through silence or exclusion.

Educators are not advocating for ideology; they are advocating for accuracy. Teaching the full history of women's rights, leadership, and resistance is not political indoctrination. It is adherence to scholarly standards, constitutional principles, and professional ethics. To obscure or erase these histories is to abandon the fundamental purpose of history education: to examine evidence, understand complexity, and draw informed conclusions.

Safeguarding women's rights requires more than policy debates. It requires historical literacy. Classrooms are among the few places where students can examine how rights were gained, how they can be lost, and who bears the consequences. Limiting this inquiry leaves students ill-equipped to participate meaningfully in civic life.

At this moment, teaching history across the nation carries both urgency and responsibility. The measure of a democracy is not only the rights it enshrines in law, but the truths it is willing to teach. If women's rights, leadership, and historical contributions are treated as optional, then democratic education itself is at risk.



“Bloody feet, Sisters, have worn smooth the path by which you come hither.”

—*Abby Kelley Foster*

1851 National Women's Rights Convention
Worcester, Massachusetts

Museum Moments: What's New in History Halls? Prudence Crandall House Museum



Walking up the quiet street in Canterbury, Connecticut, you might think you're just approaching another charming New England house. But step through the doors of the Prudence Crandall Museum, and you enter a story of courage, conviction, and the fight for justice that still resonates today.

The house itself seems ordinary at first glance, but inside, history comes alive. This is the place where Prudence Crandall, a determined and visionary teacher, opened her doors in 1833 to African American girls seeking an education, a bold move that shook the community and the state. White parents withdrew their children in protest, laws were passed to try to close her school, and Crandall faced social hostility and legal battles. Yet she stood firm, reopening her school specifically for young women of color, believing that every child deserved the chance to learn.

As you walk through the rooms, guided by the museum's passionate staff, you can almost hear the echoes of lessons long ago: the murmur of students studying, the courage in Crandall's voice as she faced the challenges of the day. Exhibits like *Canterbury Female Boarding School: Courage, Conscience, & Continuance* immerse visitors in the reality of her struggle and invite reflection on how her fight for education helped shape the larger civil rights movement.

Visiting the museum is not just about history; it's an experience that makes the past tangible. You gain a personal connection to the story of someone who refused to accept injustice, who believed in equality even when it was dangerous to do so. You leave inspired, carrying a reminder of how the courage of one person can ripple through time.

The Prudence Crandall Museum is a National Historic Landmark, part of the International Sites of Conscience, and a stop on the Connecticut Women's Heritage Trail. But beyond the accolades, its true significance lies in the lessons it offers to every visitor: the value of education, the power of moral courage, and the ongoing importance of standing up for what is right. A trip here is more than a visit, it's a journey into the heart of history, and into the courage we carry forward into our own lives.



The Prudence Crandall Museum is a member of the [International Coalition of Sites of Conscience](#).

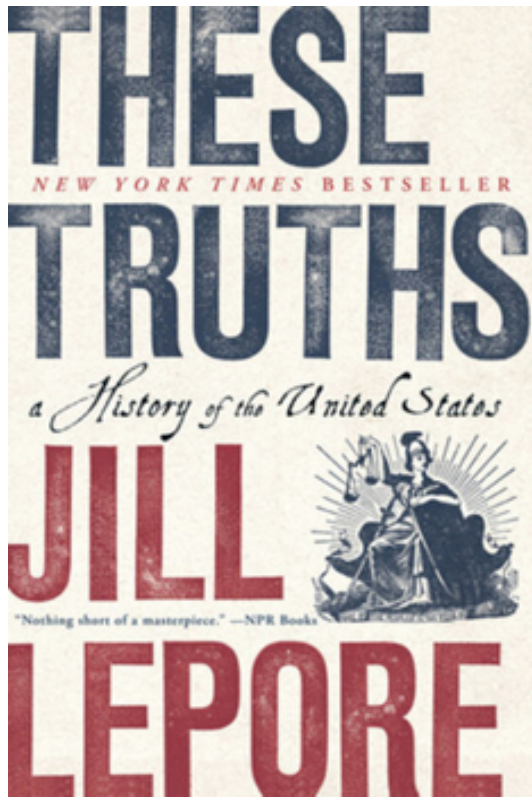
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Great Reads in Social Studies

This time, we review books about United States History by female authors. There are too many outstanding books, but here are some of our favorites:



These Truths: A History of the United States

By Jill Lepore

In *These Truths: A History of the United States*, historian Jill Lepore undertakes an ambitious and deeply consequential task: to tell the story of the United States through the tension between its founding ideals and its lived realities. Anchored in the Declaration of Independence's promises of political equality, natural rights, and popular sovereignty, Lepore traces how these "truths" have been repeatedly contested, expanded, betrayed, and reimagined over more than five centuries.

What sets *These Truths* apart from traditional survey histories is Lepore's narrative voice and interpretive throughline. Rather than presenting American history as a steady march of progress or a collection of disconnected eras, she frames it as an ongoing argument over power, citizenship, race, gender, technology, and truth itself. This approach allows readers to see continuity across time, particularly in how struggles over democracy and inclusion resurface in new forms.

Lepore excels at weaving political history with cultural and intellectual history. Major events—Revolutions, wars, elections, Supreme Court decisions are contextualized alongside developments in media, science, education, and public discourse. Her treatment of slavery, Indigenous dispossession, women's rights, and civil rights is direct and unsparing, refusing to marginalize these stories as side narratives. Instead, they are central to understanding the nation's contradictions.

The prose is elegant and accessible, though dense at times, especially in later chapters that move quickly through the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Lepore's decision to extend the narrative into the digital age, addressing misinformation, polarization, and the fragility of democratic norms, gives the book a striking immediacy. Some readers may find her analysis of recent history more overtly interpretive, but this reflects her central claim: history is inseparable from the ways societies argue about facts, evidence, and authority.

For educators, *These Truths* is particularly valuable. It models historical thinking by foregrounding evidence, debate, and perspective, making it an excellent resource for inquiry-based instruction and discussion. While not written specifically for younger audiences, its thematic structure lends itself well to excerpting for secondary and undergraduate classrooms.

Ultimately, *These Truths* is not just a history of the United States; it is a meditation on democracy and the ongoing struggle to live up to founding ideals. Lepore challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths while insisting that historical understanding is essential to civic responsibility. In a time when the meaning of truth itself is contested, this book feels both urgent and necessary.

A Brilliant Solution: Inventing the American Constitution

By Carol Berkin

In *A Brilliant Solution*, historian Carol Berkin offers a fresh and compelling account of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, challenging the traditional, almost mythic portrayal of the Founding Fathers as unified visionaries calmly crafting a flawless document. Instead, Berkin presents the Constitution as the product of intense debate, deep disagreement, and pragmatic compromise, an achievement that was anything but inevitable.

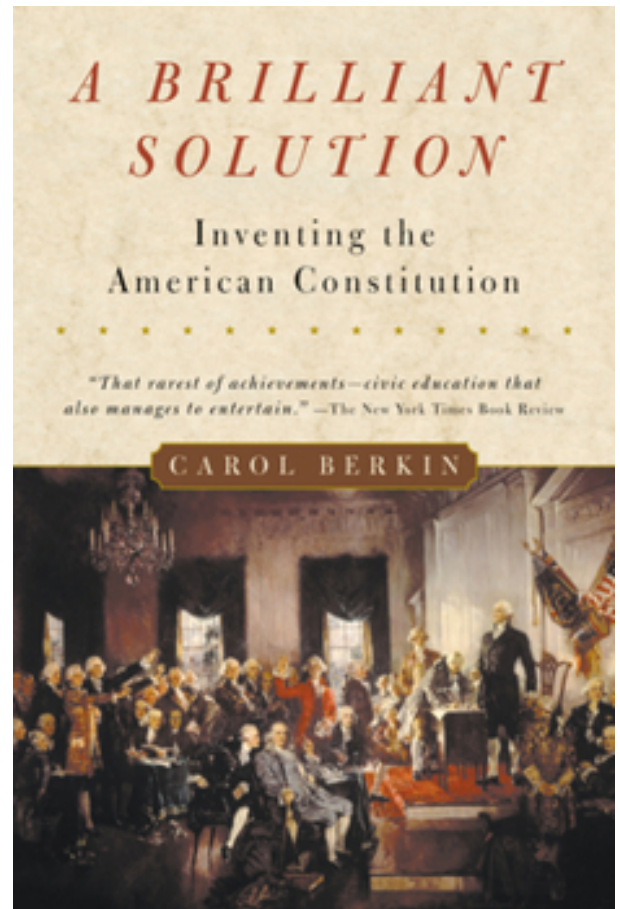
Berkin's central argument is that the Constitution was not a foregone conclusion nor a perfect expression of democratic ideals, but rather a fragile and contested solution to the very real fear that the young republic might collapse. By focusing on the conflicts among delegates, large states versus small states, North versus South, federal power versus states' rights, she demystifies the convention and humanizes its participants. Figures such as James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and George Washington appear not as marble statues but as political actors navigating uncertainty, ambition, and competing interests.

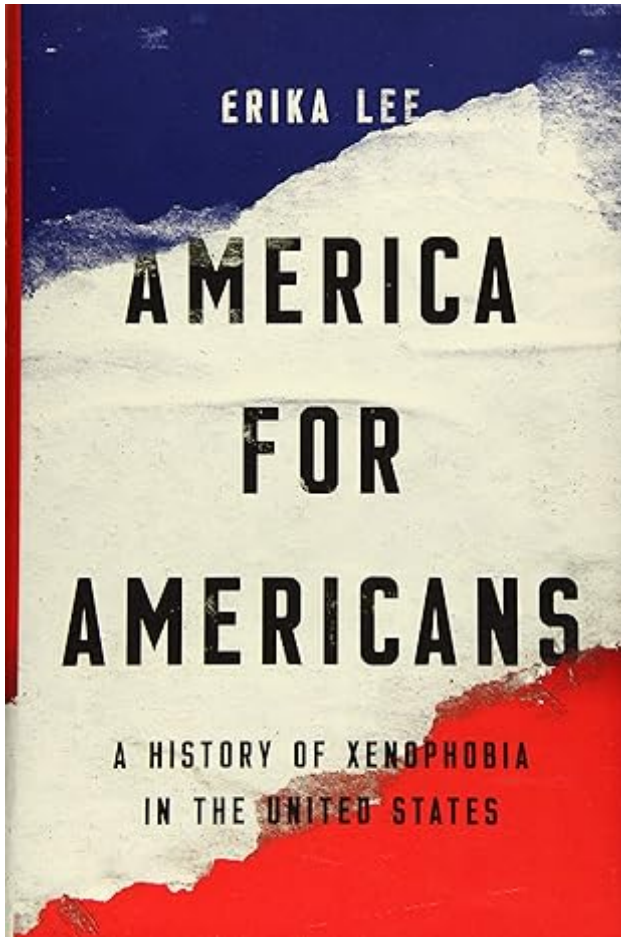
One of the book's greatest strengths is its attention to who was excluded from the room. Berkin consistently reminds readers that women, enslaved people, free African Americans, Native Americans, and non-property-holding white men had no voice in the convention, yet their lives were profoundly affected by its outcomes. Her discussion of slavery and the compromises surrounding representation and taxation is particularly effective, underscoring how moral failure and political expediency were woven directly into the nation's founding framework.

Berkin's prose is clear, concise, and highly readable, making complex constitutional issues accessible without oversimplifying them. She skillfully explains key compromises: the Great Compromise; the Three-Fifths Compromise; and the creation of the Electoral College, while emphasizing how close the convention came to failure on multiple occasions. The title's "brilliant solution" is intentionally ironic: the Constitution succeeded not because it resolved all problems, but because it created a flexible structure capable of adaptation and change.

For educators, *A Brilliant Solution* is especially valuable. It aligns well with inquiry-based and C3 Framework approaches, encouraging readers to question how governments are formed, whose interests are protected, and how power is negotiated. The book pairs effectively with primary sources from the Constitutional Convention and supports critical discussions about democratic ideals versus political reality.

Ultimately, Berkin presents the Constitution as a living document born of compromise rather than perfection. *A Brilliant Solution* invites readers to appreciate the Constitution's endurance while grappling honestly with its limitations, a perspective that feels both historically grounded and civically relevant.





America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States

By Erika Lee

In *America for Americans*, historian Erika Lee delivers a powerful and unsettling examination of xenophobia as a recurring and deeply embedded force in United States history. Rather than treating anti-immigrant sentiment as a series of isolated episodes, Lee argues convincingly that xenophobia has been a defining and continuous feature of American political culture, one that has shaped laws, elections, and national identity from the colonial era to the present.

Lee traces the roots of American xenophobia to the nation's earliest moments, revealing how fear of outsiders existed alongside the country's self-image as a land of opportunity. From hostility toward Native peoples and enslaved Africans to suspicion of Irish, Chinese, Southern and Eastern European, Mexican, Muslim, and Asian immigrants, Lee demonstrates how definitions of who counts as "American" have repeatedly narrowed and expanded depending on economic anxiety, racial ideology, and political expediency.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its clear distinction between immigration policy and xenophobia. Lee emphasizes that debates over borders and citizenship are not inherently xenophobic; rather, xenophobia emerges when fear, racialization, and misinformation are used to exclude entire groups and deny them basic rights. This framing allows readers to critically evaluate historical moments such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the National Origins Act of 1924, Japanese American incarceration during World War II, and post-9/11 immigration policies without collapsing them into simplistic narratives.

Lee's writing is accessible, well-structured, and deeply grounded in scholarship. She integrates personal stories, political rhetoric, court cases, and grassroots resistance movements to show how immigrants and their allies have consistently challenged exclusion and discrimination. Particularly effective is her attention to the role of media and political language in amplifying fear, an analysis that resonates strongly in the contemporary digital age.

For educators, *America for Americans* is an exceptionally valuable text. Its thematic organization makes it well suited for inquiry-based instruction, allowing students to trace continuity and change over time while examining cause and consequence. The book pairs naturally with primary sources such as immigration laws, political cartoons, speeches, and personal narratives, supporting C3 Framework skills in contextualization, corroboration, and argumentation.

Ultimately, Lee does not present xenophobia as an inevitable or permanent condition. By highlighting moments of resistance, reform, and expansion of rights, she underscores the ongoing struggle to align American practices with democratic ideals. *America for Americans* challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths while recognizing the power of historical knowledge to inform more just policy decisions.

The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women

By Kate Moore

In *The Radium Girls*, Kate Moore delivers a gripping and deeply unsettling account of one of the most devastating episodes of industrial negligence in American history. Centered on the young women who worked painting luminous watch dials with radium in the early twentieth century, Moore exposes how corporate greed, scientific misconduct, and systemic sexism combined to produce profound human suffering and lasting legal change.

Moore's narrative follows dozens of women, many of them teenagers, who were employed by companies such as the United States Radium Corporation. Encouraged to "lip-point" their brushes to achieve fine detail, the workers ingested radium daily, unaware of its lethal effects. As the women began to suffer horrific illnesses such as jaw necrosis, anemia, bone fractures, and cancers, the companies responsible denied wrongdoing, suppressed scientific evidence, and blamed the victims themselves.

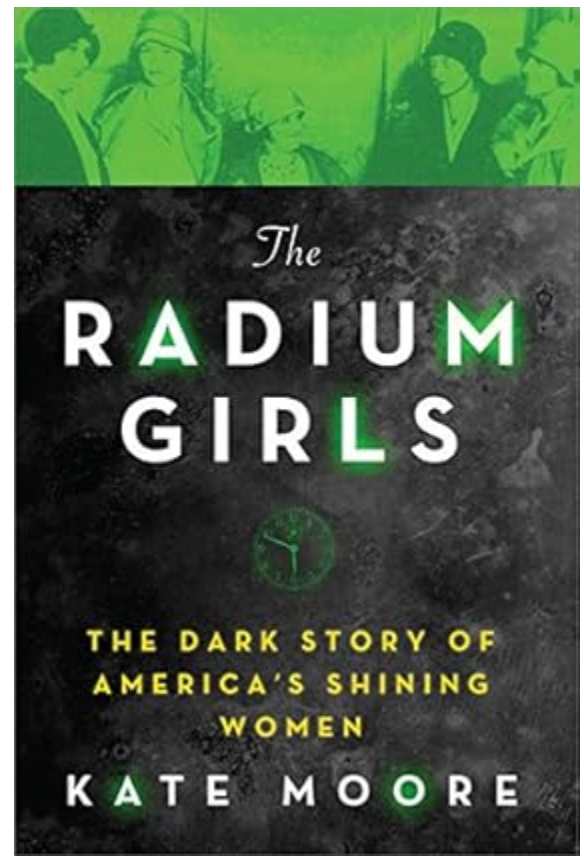
One of the book's greatest strengths is Moore's commitment to restoring individuality and dignity to the women at the center of the story. Rather than reducing them to statistics or symbols, she reconstructs their lives through letters, court transcripts, medical records, and family accounts. Readers come to know these women not only as workers, but as daughters, wives, friends, and activists who refused to remain silent even as their health deteriorated.

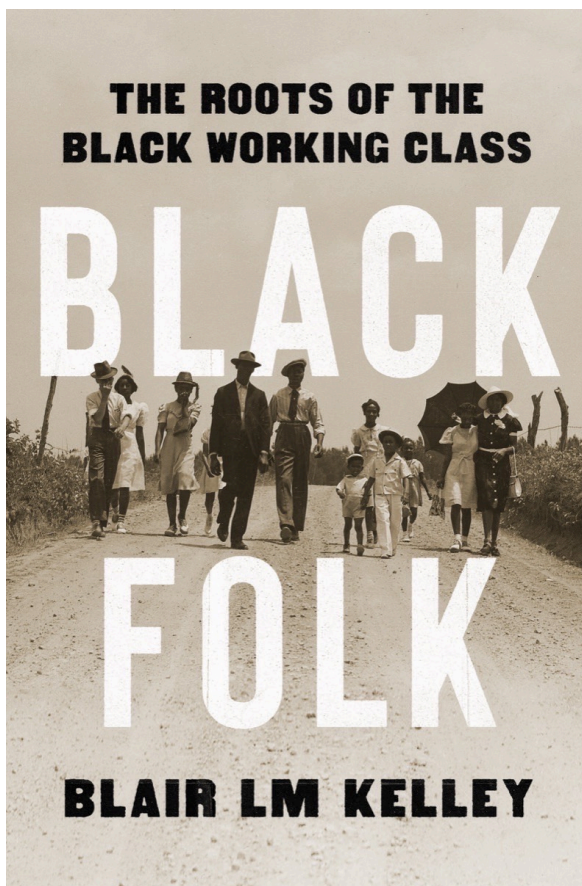
Moore also situates the radium girls' struggle within a broader historical context. She illuminates the lack of workplace protections for women, the emerging but contested field of industrial medicine, and the legal barriers that made it nearly impossible for sick workers to sue powerful corporations. The book demonstrates how the women's lawsuits, though slow, painful, and often incomplete, helped lay the groundwork for labor protections, occupational safety standards, and corporate accountability.

The prose is vivid and accessible, reading at times like investigative journalism and at others like narrative nonfiction. While the graphic descriptions of illness may be difficult for some readers, they serve an important purpose: refusing to sanitize the consequences of exploitation. Moore's moral clarity is evident, yet she allows the historical evidence to speak for itself, making the injustice undeniable.

For educators, *The Radium Girls* is a powerful interdisciplinary text. It pairs well with units on the Progressive Era, women's labor history, industrialization, public health, and the development of labor law. The book invites rich inquiry into ethical responsibility, scientific integrity, gender inequality, and the role of citizens in challenging entrenched power.

Ultimately, *The Radium Girls* is both a cautionary tale and a tribute. It honors the courage of women who, in the face of illness and intimidation, fought for truth and justice, and in doing so, helped make workplaces safer for generations to come.





Black Folk: The Roots of the Black Working Class

By **Blair L. M. Kelley**

In *Black Folk: The Roots of the Black Working Class*, historian Blair L. M. Kelley offers a powerful and necessary reinterpretation of Black working-class history in the United States. Moving beyond narratives that focus primarily on political elites, middle-class reformers, or iconic civil rights leaders, Kelley centers the everyday lives, labor, and activism of Black workers from the post-Civil War era through the early twentieth century. Her work challenges readers to rethink who shaped American labor movements and how race and class have been inseparably linked in U.S. history.

Kelley's central argument is that Black working-class communities were not passive victims of segregation, discrimination, and exploitation. Instead, they were dynamic agents who built institutions, organized labor actions, created political movements, and developed a rich culture of resistance. Through detailed case studies, particularly in the urban South, Kelley reveals how dockworkers, domestic workers, industrial laborers, and migrants forged networks of mutual aid, unions,

churches, fraternal organizations, and political groups to confront both economic injustice and racial oppression.

One of the book's most compelling contributions is its challenge to the traditional labor history narrative that often marginalizes Black workers or treats them as peripheral to organized labor. Kelley demonstrates that Black workers developed their own forms of class consciousness and labor organizing, frequently in response to exclusion from white-led unions and political institutions. By highlighting Black-led labor activism, she reframes the working class itself as multiracial, contested, and deeply shaped by racism and segregation.

Kelley's research is deeply grounded in archival sources, including newspapers, union records, personal correspondence, and organizational documents. Her writing is scholarly yet accessible, weaving social, political, and cultural history into a cohesive narrative. While the book is dense in places, it rewards careful reading with rich insights into the intersections of race, labor, migration, and community life.

For educators, *Black Folk* is an invaluable resource for teaching Reconstruction, the New South, the Progressive Era, and the Great Migration. It supports inquiry-based approaches by prompting questions about who is included in historical narratives, how power operates in labor systems, and how marginalized communities organize for change. The text pairs well with primary sources such as labor union documents, Black newspapers, and oral histories, making it ideal for upper-level secondary or undergraduate classrooms.

Ultimately, *Black Folk* expands the story of American labor and democracy by centering the experiences of Black workers who shaped both their communities and the broader nation. Kelley's work underscores that the history of the working class is inseparable from the history of race, and that struggles for economic justice and civil rights have long been intertwined.

Connecticut Chronicles (State History & Geography)

Notable historical events in women's history that occurred in Connecticut, March through May

MARCH - Law, Resistance, and Modern Advocacy

1833 - Prudence Crandall Arrested (Canterbury)

Crandall was arrested for educating Black girls, challenging both racial segregation and limits on women's authority.

1834 - National Attention on the Crandall Trial

Abolitionists and women's rights advocates rallied around Crandall's case, linking education to civil rights.

1853 - Married Women Petition for Property Rights

Connecticut women pushed for laws allowing married women to own property and control wages.

1917 - Connecticut Suffragists Intensify Organizing

Women increased marches, speeches, and lobbying as the fight for the vote entered its final phase.

1973 - Women Organize After *Roe v. Wade*

Connecticut women mobilized to protect reproductive rights and expand healthcare access.

1975 - Expanded State Protections Against Sex Discrimination

Following ERA ratification, Connecticut strengthened civil rights protections for women.

1991 - Workplace Equity Advocacy Grows

Women across the state engaged in reforms addressing sexual harassment and discrimination.

2022 - Connecticut Codifies Abortion Rights

The state passed laws safeguarding abortion access and protecting patients and providers.

APRIL - Education, Reform, and Equality

1833 - Crandall's School Reopens for Black Girls Only

The first academy for Black girls in the U.S. opens in Canterbury under women's leadership.

1869 - Isabella Beecher Hooker Leads Suffrage Meetings (Hartford)

Hooker helped connect Connecticut women to the national women's rights movement.

1914 - Women Support Labor and Factory Reforms

Connecticut women advocated for safer working conditions and child labor laws.

1921 - League of Women Voters Expands in Connecticut

Women organized to educate new voters and promote civic participation.

1974 - Connecticut Ratifies the Equal Rights Amendment

The state formally endorsed constitutional equality regardless of sex.

1984 - Expansion of Women's Health Advocacy

Women-led organizations worked to improve access to healthcare and preventative services.

2009 - Connecticut Strengthens Equal Pay Protections

State leaders addressed wage disparities through policy reform and enforcement.

2019 - Women Lead Civic and Community Movements

Women across Connecticut played key roles in education, voting access, and social justice efforts.

MAY - Service, Leadership, and Political Power

1777 - Connecticut Women Support the Revolutionary War

Women produced supplies, managed farms, and organized boycotts essential to the war effort.

1861 - Connecticut Women Serve as Civil War Nurses

Women volunteered in hospitals and aid societies, advancing nursing as a profession.

May 1890 - Women Expand Roles in Education and Reform

Women increasingly served as teachers, administrators, and reform leaders statewide.

May 1920 - Women Prepare for Voting Rights

Connecticut women organized voter education campaigns ahead of the 19th Amendment.

May 1965 - Women Engage in Civil Rights and Antiwar Activism

Connecticut women participated in national movements for justice and peace.

May 1992 - Growth of Women in Statewide Political Office

Women held more leadership positions in government and public service.

May 2013 - Women Advocate for Education and Healthcare Policy

Women-led coalitions shaped legislation affecting families and communities.

May 2021 - Women Lead Public Health and Community Response Efforts

Women played central roles in healthcare, education, and local government during crisis response.

These events highlight Connecticut's rich history and its contributions to significant national developments.

National Women's History Month

Each March, the United States observes National Women's History Month, a time dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the vital contributions women have made to American history, culture, and society. From shaping democratic ideals and advancing civil rights to leading innovations in science, education, the arts, and public service, women's voices and actions have been essential to the nation's story, often in ways that were overlooked or undervalued at the time.

National Women's History Month has its roots in grassroots activism. In 1978, educators in Sonoma County, California, organized a local "Women's History Week" to coincide with International Women's Day on March 8. The idea gained national momentum, and in 1987, Congress officially designated the entire month of March as National Women's History Month. Since then, each year has featured a theme highlighting specific contributions and experiences of women throughout history.

Throughout American history, women have played key roles in movements for independence, abolition, suffrage, labor rights, and civil rights. Figures such as Abigail Adams, Sojourner Truth,



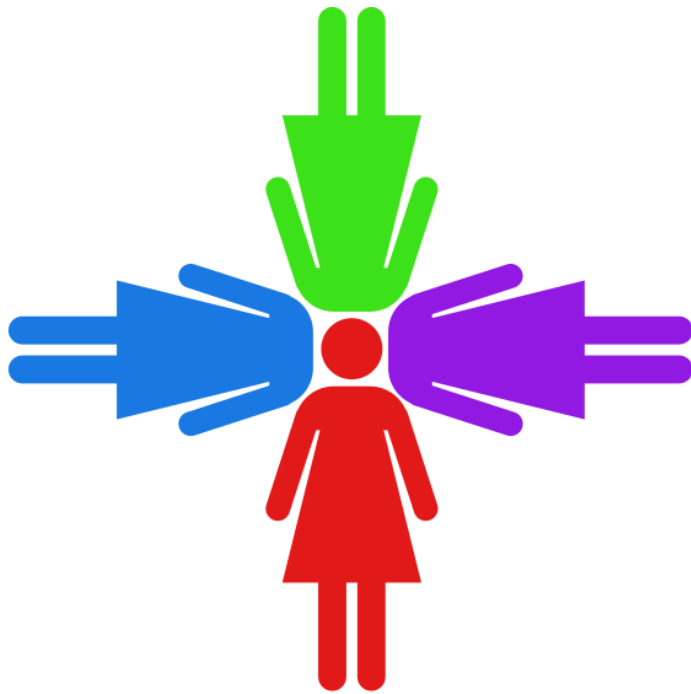
Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells, Dolores Huerta, and countless others challenged injustice and expanded the meaning of freedom and equality. Their efforts laid the groundwork for progress that continues today.

Women have also transformed fields traditionally closed to them. Trailblazers like Marie Curie, Katherine Johnson, Sally Ride, and Jane Goodall broke barriers in science and exploration. In education, women have long been leaders as teachers, reformers, and advocates for equity. In the arts and literature, voices such as Maya Angelou, Georgia O'Keeffe,

and Toni Morrison have shaped cultural identity and national dialogue.

National Women's History Month is not only about honoring the past. It is also about recognizing the achievements of women today and inspiring future generations. It encourages reflection on the progress that has been made, while also acknowledging the challenges that remain in the pursuit of gender equality, representation, and opportunity.

By learning and sharing women's stories, we gain a fuller, more accurate understanding of history. March serves as a reminder that history is strongest when it includes all voices and that the contributions of women, past and present, continue to shape the nation and the world.



Women's History Month

Women's History in Connecticut

Connecticut's history has been profoundly shaped by the leadership, courage, and innovation of women whose contributions span centuries. From colonial-era advocates for education and reform to modern leaders in civil rights, politics, labor, and the arts, women in Connecticut have played a central role in shaping the state's social, political, and cultural identity.

In the colonial and early national periods, Connecticut women were active participants in their communities, even when formal power was denied to them. Women managed farms, businesses, and households while also

influencing religious and civic life. Prudence Crandall stands as one of the state's most significant early reformers. In the 1830s, she opened a school in Canterbury for Black girls, defying intense local opposition. Her bravery made Connecticut a national focal point in the fight for educational equality and civil rights.

In the 19th century, Connecticut emerged as an important center for reform movements, and few figures are as significant as Harriet Beecher Stowe. Living in Hartford for much of her life, Stowe was the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), a novel that exposed the moral horrors of slavery and energized the abolitionist movement in the United States and abroad. The book had a profound impact on public opinion in the years leading up to the Civil War, demonstrating the power of women's voices in shaping national debate. Today, the Harriet Beecher Stowe House in Hartford stands as a reminder of Connecticut's role in the fight against slavery and the enduring influence of women writers and reformers.

Additionally, the 19th century brought other Connecticut women to the forefront of the abolitionist and suffrage movements. Women such as Isabella Beecher Hooker, Frances Ellen Burr, and Emily Pierson were instrumental in advocating for women's right to vote and legal equality. Connecticut women organized conventions, published essays, and challenged laws that denied them political voice. Though Connecticut was slow to ratify the 19th Amendment, the persistent activism of women across the state helped secure voting rights nationwide.

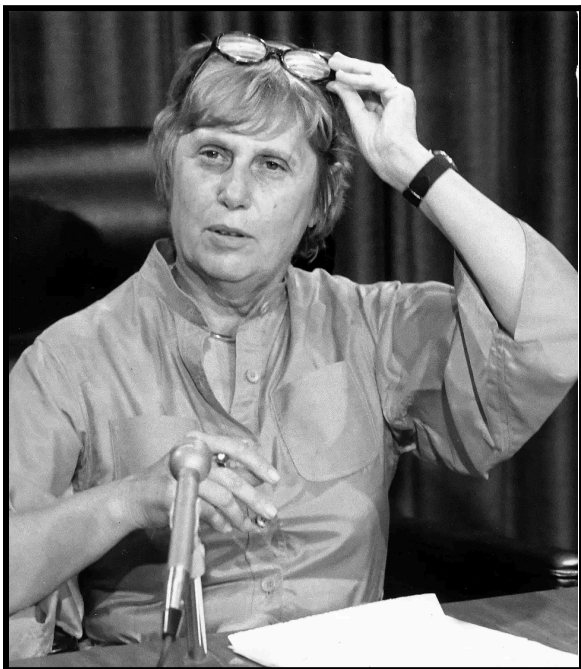
Connecticut also played a critical role in women's labor history. During the Industrial Revolution, women worked in textile mills, factories, and manufacturing centers across towns such as Willimantic, Bridgeport, and New Haven. These women were essential to the state's economic growth and were among the first to organize for safer working conditions, fair wages, and labor protections. Their efforts helped lay the foundation for modern labor laws.

In the 20th century, Connecticut women continued to break barriers in politics, education, and social justice. Ella Grasso made history in 1974 as the first woman in the United States elected governor in her own right, without succeeding her husband. Her leadership redefined expectations for women in political office and inspired generations of public servants. Connecticut women were also deeply involved in the civil rights movement, advocating for desegregation, fair housing, and equal access to education.



Harriet Beecher Stowe

The state has long been a center for women's leadership in education and the arts. Connecticut women have shaped public schools, higher education institutions, museums, and cultural organizations. Writers, artists, and performers from the state have contributed to national conversations on identity, equity, and creativity, ensuring that women's perspectives are reflected in American culture.



Today, women in Connecticut continue to lead in government, business, science, education, and community activism. National Women's History Month provides an opportunity to honor these achievements while recognizing the work still needed to ensure equity and representation for all women.

By exploring women's history in Connecticut we gain a deeper understanding of the state itself, one built not only by well-known leaders, but also by countless women whose determination, resilience, and vision shaped their communities and strengthened democracy. Connecticut history demonstrates that women were here, not as supporting characters, but as central architects of the state's history and progress.

Ella T. Grasso, First Female Governor

Civic Sparks: Topics Regarding Women Around the World Today

Around the globe, women continue to spark civic change, sometimes through mass movements, sometimes through everyday acts of resistance and leadership. While the historical roots of women's rights are deep, today's challenges reflect a rapidly changing world shaped by technology, migration, conflict, and global interconnectedness. These five topics dominate current conversations about women and civic life worldwide.

Today, the issue is no longer simply whether women *can* vote, but whether they are meaningfully represented in government. Women remain underrepresented in legislatures and executive leadership across much of the world. In some regions, legal barriers, violence, or intimidation discourage women from running for office or participating in political life. At the same time, women-led movements, from protest organizers to local council leaders, are pushing for inclusive democracies and transparent governance. Representation is a measure of a healthy democracy.

Access to education remains uneven, especially in areas affected by poverty, war, or displacement. Girls are disproportionately affected when schools close or families must choose which children to educate. Digital learning has created new opportunities, but also widened gaps where technology is inaccessible.

Global advocacy continues to frame girls' education as a civic right, not a privilege, tied directly to economic growth, health outcomes, resilience, and political stability. Women across the world still face wage gaps, job segregation, and limited access to financial resources. Informal and care-based labor, often performed by women, remains undervalued or invisible in many economies.

Modern movements focus on pay transparency, parental leave, childcare access, and protections for migrant and informal workers. Economic equity is increasingly viewed as essential to full civic participation. Health and personal safety are central civic issues for women today. Access to healthcare, reproductive services, and protection from gender-based violence varies widely by region and political system. In some countries, women are gaining expanded rights; in others, long-held protections are being rolled back. These debates highlight how personal choices intersect with public policy and how women's bodies often become political battlegrounds. Bodily autonomy is a human and civic right.

Technology has transformed women's civic engagement. Social media platforms amplify voices, expose injustice, and connect movements across borders. At the same time, women face disproportionate online harassment, censorship, and misinformation. From hashtag campaigns to digital organizing, women are redefining activism in the 21st century while also demanding safer, more equitable digital spaces. Technology is both a tool for empowerment and a new frontier for rights.

Today's civic sparks reflect a world in transition. Progress for women is neither linear nor guaranteed, but history shows that sustained civic engagement drives change. Understanding these global issues helps students and citizens recognize that women's rights are not "women's issues" alone. They are fundamental to democracy, justice, and global stability.

The sparks are still flying. What matters now is how societies choose to respond.



Global Issues & Emerging Trends Influencing Social Studies Education

Climate Change and Environmental Resilience

Rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and resource scarcity are reshaping human settlement patterns, economies, and political decision-making. Social studies classrooms increasingly focus on climate justice, environmental policy, sustainability, and the ways communities adapt to ecological change.

Global Migration and Demographic Shifts

Migration driven by conflict, climate, economics, and social pressures is altering demographics across continents. Students explore how migration impacts identity, labor markets, culture, urbanization, and policy debates surrounding borders, integration, and human rights.

Political Polarization and Democratic Fragility

From contested elections to declining trust in institutions, nations are confronting challenges to democratic norms. Educators emphasize media literacy, civic reasoning, civil discourse, and the responsibilities of citizenship in maintaining healthy democracies.

Technological Acceleration and AI Literacy

Artificial intelligence, automation, and digital surveillance are transforming work, communication, and governance. Social studies examines how technology shapes power, privacy, inequality, and the future of citizenship while preparing students to navigate digital civic spaces.

Global Economic Inequality

The gap between wealthy and poor nations, and within societies, continues to widen. Students analyze how economic systems, trade networks, labor conditions, and public policy influence life chances and shape local and global stability.

Conflict, Security, and Geopolitical Tension

Ongoing conflicts, shifting alliances, cybersecurity threats, and competition over resources are influencing global power structures. Social studies helps students understand root causes, humanitarian impacts, and the role of diplomacy and international institutions.

Public Health and Global Interdependence

Pandemics and public health crises reveal how societies are interconnected. Lessons emphasize scientific literacy, crisis response, government responsibility, community resilience, and the ethical questions that arise during global emergencies.

Human Rights and Social Justice Movements

Movements advocating gender equality, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, Indigenous sovereignty, and religious freedom shape national and global policies. Social studies explores evolving definitions of justice, rights, activism, and the role of individuals in social change.

Urbanization and Changes in Human Settlement

Cities continue to expand rapidly, bringing both opportunity and strain. Students investigate infrastructure, housing, sustainability, transportation, and how changing urban landscapes influence culture and civic life.

Cultural Exchange and Globalization

Global media, trade networks, and digital communication accelerate cultural exchange. Social studies considers how globalization affects identity, language, consumer behavior, and the blending, sometimes clashing, of cultural traditions.

Indigenous Knowledge and Decolonizing Education

There is growing recognition of Indigenous histories, perspectives, and worldviews. Social studies is shifting toward more inclusive narratives, land-based learning, and critical examination of colonization's lasting impacts.

Youth Civic Engagement and Student Voice

Young people worldwide are assuming leadership roles in climate activism, human rights advocacy, and political participation. Schools increasingly incorporate project-based civic learning, action civics, and opportunities for students to engage with real-world community issues.

Skills for the Next Generation

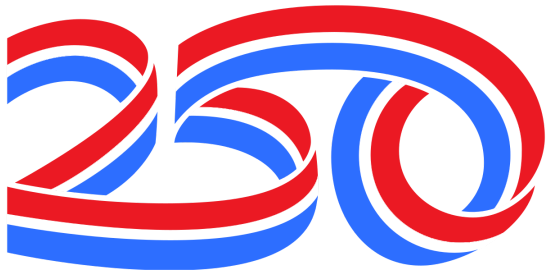
Emerging Essential Skills:

- Critical thinking and media literacy
- Empathy and intercultural communication
- Ethical reasoning and civic responsibility
- Systems thinking and problem-solving
- Collaboration and leadership in digital spaces

The Takeaway

In a world of rapid change, social studies classrooms are becoming laboratories for democratic thinking, global awareness, and responsible action. Whether through discussions of AI ethics, climate resilience, or civic participation, educators have the opportunity, and responsibility, to help students understand their shared humanity and power to make a difference.

AMERICA



As you all know July 4, 2026 will be the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States. There is an America 250 Commission in Connecticut that is planning statewide events; many communities in Connecticut have local commissions that are planning events for their cities and towns. The statewide America250 Commission has an education subcommittee; Steve Armstrong has the honor of serving as the chairperson of that group.

If you go to the Connecticut America250 website (<https://ct250.org/>) you will find many resources that will assist you in the teaching of this important topic. We have determined that four major themes can guide schools and towns as they approach July 4, 2026:

- Tell Inclusive Stories
- The Power of Place
- Doing History
- For the Common Good



The statewide commission has also spent much time on how to approach this topic: should this be a “celebration” or a “commemoration” of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Revolutionary War. The answer is both! We should celebrate the founding of our nation and the ideas in our founding documents. At the same time, students and teachers should analyze how the concepts emerging from our founding documents have developed over time and how, in fact, during certain periods of our history these ideas have been challenged.

What can districts, schools, teachers and teachers do regarding the study of July 4, 2026:

- Study the events and the impact of these events in classrooms. What was the role of Connecticut and your own community in this revolutionary era? In all probability, your community was involved, in some way, in the American Revolution. We are developing a way that research that classes and students do can be published so that Connecticut residents can see the work that students have done.
 - Reach out and have students work with local historical societies and local America250 commissions. Many of these organizations would love to collaborate with local students; many would welcome the input of students in planning community events.
 - For teachers: we are planning a number of podcasts and webinars that are related to America250: these will be publicized in various ways. We will also be producing curriculum materials that will be distributed to all districts.
 - For teachers and students: note that the new Ken Burns series on the Revolutionary War will be televised starting in mid-November. Get engaged in this series!
- We are greatly looking forward to having students and teachers involved in these important topics. If you want more information, contact Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov



Capitol Chatter

The 2026 Connecticut General Assembly session runs February 4 - May 6, 2026 and includes several education-focused proposals that touch on civic education, curriculum, and broader civic themes, even if not all are strictly “social studies bills.”

Connecticut: Active Laws / Bills & Implications

❖ **HB 05033: Implementing the Governor’s Education Budget**

Status: Introduced; referred to Joint Committee on Education

This bill would enact portions of Gov. Lamont’s education budget for 2026, shaping funding levels and priorities for K-12 education broadly. Budget decisions often impact programming that includes social studies resources, civics activities, and standards implementation.

❖ **SB 00034: Increase in Education Cost-Sharing Foundation Amount**

Status: Introduced; referred to Joint Committee on Education

While focused on state school funding formula changes, SB 34 can indirectly affect social studies offerings by adjusting overall education finance that schools use for staffing, materials, and extracurricular civic programs.

❖ **HB 7009: State Seal of Civics Education & Curriculum Provisions**

Status (2025 session; carried into debate) Included measures to:

- Create a **Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement** for high-school diplomas.
- Expand curriculum material availability (e.g., Islamic & Arab studies).
- Establish a working group to address antisemitism in schools.
- Tackle issues like multilingual learner data and smart devices in schools.

Broader Education Policy Debates with Civics/Relevance

Several high-profile education issues in Connecticut intersect with civic themes even if not explicitly coded as “social studies bills”:

- Cellphone ban in schools and digital/algorithm impacts on students touches on youth civic engagement and classroom environment debates.
- Universal school breakfasts and special education funding reforms shifts in policy that organisers and educators frame as equity- and citizenship-related.

These proposals shape the education environment that social studies teachers and students interact with.

Federal: Active bills, Executive Actions & National Initiatives

At the national level, several bills introduced in the 119th U.S. Congress directly relate to civics education, civic engagement, and education policy that social studies teachers or curriculum designers should know about.

❖ **S. 2841: CIVICS Act of 2025**

Introduced: Senate (Sep 17 2025); referred to HELP Committee

This bill aims to amend the American History and Civics Education program under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to require hands-on civic engagement activities for teachers and students, as well as instructional programs on U.S. constitutional principles, including the Bill of Rights. It's a targeted civics education enhancement bill.

❖ **H.Res. 894: House Resolution on Civics**

Status: Introduced Nov 19 2025

A non-binding House resolution affirming that strong public education in U.S. history and civics is essential for preserving the nation's founding ideals, especially in light of the upcoming 250th anniversary of the United States.

❖ **Crucial Communism Teaching Act (H.R. 2080 / S. 1001)**

Origin: Carried from the 118th Congress; re-introduced in 119th Congress

This proposal would direct development and distribution of civics-related curriculum focusing on the history and impacts of communism. It has been controversial for its ideological framing and implications for curriculum content.

❖ **Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act (H.R. 22)**

Passed House: April 10 2025

While not an education bill per se, this federal bill would require documentary proof of U.S. citizenship to register to vote. Its implications span civic education (how we teach voting rights) and public discourse on citizenship and participation.

❖ **Other Federal Education Bills with Civic Impacts (Emerging Trends)**

While not all are clearly defined or directly "social studies bills," these active legislative themes influence the environment in which civic and social studies instruction occurs:

- **Returning Education to Our States Act (S. 1402):** abolishing the Department of Education, which could reshape federal authority over civics and history curriculum.
- **H.R. 266 — Educational Opportunity and Success Act of 2025:** focuses on TRIO programs that help low-income students succeed, indirectly supporting equity in civic opportunity.
- **Federal Education Freedom Tax Credit:** tax credits for education donations could shift private/public education dynamics.

Broader Policy & Context (Why It Matters for Social Studies)

- Connecticut schools are already implementing expanded social studies requirements, including units in civics, media literacy, and Asian American & Pacific Islander history from laws passed prior to 2026.
- Nationally, there are hundreds of state civics education bills under consideration across the U.S., showing a growing legislative focus on civic learning and engagement.



Civic Engagement Opportunities Around Connecticut

Human Rights Close to Home Fellowship (UConn)

High school students can apply for a year-long, stipend-supported program focused on civic action and human rights education.

Connecticut Forest & Park Association Opportunities:

- Flexible opportunities: Becoming an Advocacy Team Member, Trails Volunteer, or Environmental Education Volunteer are options with flexible schedules.

Ongoing and Flexible Civic Engagement:

- Connecticut Democracy Center: Offers volunteer opportunities and civics education programs.
- United Way of Greater New Haven: Offers various volunteer opportunities.
- United Way of Southeastern Connecticut: Offers warehouse volunteering and Mobile Food Pantry programs.

Below are links to help **educate and empower your engagement with your government.**

- [Register to Vote](#)
- [Find Your Polling Place, Upcoming Elections, Voter Registration Deadlines, Ballot Drop Box Locations, and more](#)
- [Absentee Ballot Information](#)
- [Guide to Voter Rights](#)
- [Disability Voting Rights Information](#)
- [Military and Overseas Citizen Voting Guidelines](#)
- [CT General Assembly Citizen's Guide](#)
- [How to Find Your Representatives](#)
- [CT General Assembly Bulletin](#): Informs you of legislative events including public hearings and committee meetings
- [CT Network](#): Broadcasts meetings and events happening at the State Capitol
- [Be A Poll Worker](#)
- [Information on how to get on the ballot to run for office in Connecticut](#)
- [Links to Major and Minor Political Parties in Connecticut](#)

[NCSS: Advocacy at the State/Local Level](#)

- **Date:** online any time
- Location: online through NCSS website

The National Council for the Social Studies offers opportunities for people to become advocates for Civic Education at both the State and Local levels through their online resources and ongoing opportunities for learning.

[Civics in the Community](#)

- [Civics 101: Educational Resources and Materials](#)
- [Civically Engaged Organization \(CEO\) Pledge](#)
- [The Power of Civics](#)
- [Next Gen Elections](#)
- [Connecticut Civic Health Index](#)
- [League of Women Voters Connecticut](#)
- [Everyday Democracy](#)

[Civics in the Classroom](#)

- [Red, White, and Blue Schools](#)
- [Connecticut's Kid Governor®](#)
- [Voting Rights Unit \(High School\)](#)
- [Internship Opportunities](#)
- [My Election My Vote](#) (formally known as the Connecticut Election Project)

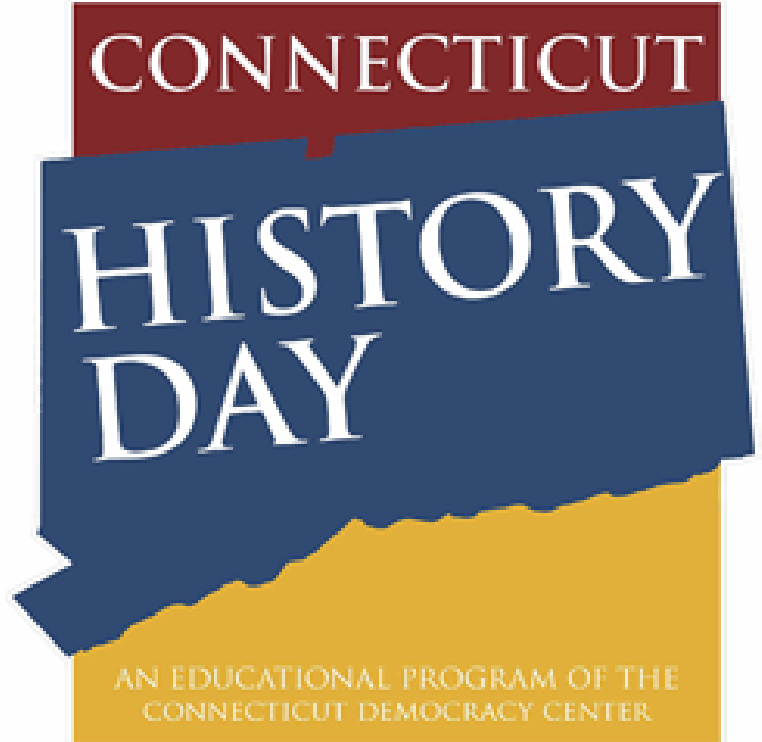


Get Involved!

Judges: Connecticut History Day

Judges serve a critical role in CT History Day. Without the generosity of volunteer judges, who bring their love of history from a variety of backgrounds, the program simply would not exist. In providing fair and impartial review of student projects, our judges allow us to ensure that each contestant is given the commensurate amount of encouragement and acknowledgement throughout the process. This results in a fun and enriching experience for all parties involved. [Here](#) is more information about judging.

- If interested in judging at a contest, please sign up through the registration system. Please review Registration Instructions for Judges before beginning the registration process.
- Potential Judges should review Expectations for [Judges & Materials to Review](#)
- Judges who have already registered, should visit our [Judging Instructions](#) by Category and [Judges FAQ](#). There you will find helpful information to help answer any questions you might have.
- We now have guidance for the use of Artificial Intelligence in History Day projects, please review [NHD and AI](#)



For those of you who are looking for resources and information you can use in your classrooms, check out the [CCSS Website!](#)