

WISTAX: Boosts civics education

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Nonpartisan Group's Curriculum Educates, Engages Students

MADISON—As students head back to school, they'll have a new tool to help them understand Wisconsin state and local government—and how to be better, more engaged citizens.

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX) is releasing the 19th edition of *The Framework of Your Wisconsin Government*, WISTAX's civics text that builds on the nonpartisan organization's longstanding efforts to demystify state and local government and foster civil dialogue.

The *Framework* is the only civics curriculum to focus exclusively on Wisconsin state and local government. The new edition enhances this unique perspective with a chapter on Native American tribal governments in the state, outlining the legal and historical basis of state-tribal relations and tribal sovereignty.

The new text comes at a time when state and national leaders are calling for a more civil dialogue in public life, said WISTAX President Todd A. Berry. "Essential to this dialogue is a shared public knowledge of how governmental institutions work and how state and local governments serve citizens and their communities," he said.

National surveys consistently show such knowledge is often lacking among students, Berry said. Less than one-fourth of American high school seniors performed at or above proficiency in civics, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

The *Framework* text is being ordered by schools across the state. First published in 1955, it is used widely in middle and high schools, GED programs, and even college courses.

The text includes chapters that explain the state budget process, as well as the roles and responsibilities of state, county, city, town, village, and Native American tribal governments, and school districts. The book explains how the state and local governments pay for services, including a section on how property taxes are calculated, as well as how students can get involved at the state and local level.

The *Framework* complies with DPI standards on civics education, and is available in paper and digital formats. The four-color book includes easy-to-read charts and illustrations, while the digital edition includes links to online resources.

Also available is a digital-only Teacher Tool Kit, which includes PowerPoint presentations, study guides, and quizzes for each chapter, as well as extended readings and real-life simulations to bring civics alive to students.

In addition to helping schools meet statutory requirements to teach state -local government and Native American tribal governance, the *Framework* is also suitable for community groups or book clubs that want to help citizens brush-up on their knowledge of state and local government.

One example, Berry said, is a budget simulation that brings home the hard challenges facing elected officials and the public when it comes to making decisions about valued programs and public money.

“That exercise would be a great activity for many community groups,” he added.

WISTAX seeks sponsors to make the textbook available to every library in the state, and to provide free copies to all high school students in Wisconsin. Several charitable groups have already ordered copies for their local students. Individual copies of the text are \$15.95; quantity discounts are available.

A free preview of *The Framework of Your Wisconsin Government* is available at <http://wistax.org/publications/framework-textbook>. The book can be ordered online or by calling WISTAX for more information at [608.241.9789](tel:608.241.9789).