

BY DEAN R. DIETRICH

The State Bar of Wisconsin is working with several organizations to provide educational programs on how elections should function and the importance of the legal issues underlying election processes in the United States.



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Moving the Profession Forward: Support Civic Education

Regardless of political affiliation, lawyers have a vital role to play in educating the public about how elections and governing work in the United States.

Many stories have been written about the lack of knowledge about the democratic form of government in the U.S. Some articles have focused on election issues and low voter turnout in state and national elections. Others have focused on many people's lack of knowledge about how government works. Many articles suggest that citizens cannot name their federal and state representatives or name all the justices on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Although some of the underlying research studied small numbers of people, concerns about low levels of civic participation and lack of knowledge about democracy and government cannot be dismissed. The Pew Research Center recently found that only four percent of U.S. adults believe that the nation's political system is working well or extremely well.

Lawyers should be concerned about this deficiency. State and federal governments operate under the authority of laws and regulations and when people do not understand how governments work, lawyers are far less relevant. Having knowledge about the law and how government works is an advantage for lawyers but not if other people do not care about how governments function and the reasons for a democratic society. Lawyers must pay attention to this and speak out about the importance of civic education and learning about the business of government.

The State Bar of Wisconsin is working with several organizations to provide educational programs on how elections should function and the importance of the legal issues underlying election processes in the United States. This is an important component of legal education and something that lawyers should be knowledgeable about. Lawyers need to go further and talk about the importance of civic education. You can get more information from the Center for Civic Education at www.civiced.org.

And remember, lawyer wellness is important! **wl**



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