



VMUN 2024

United States Senate

BACKGROUND GUIDE



VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

The Twenty-Third Annual Session | January 26–28, 2024

Darren Tsai
Secretary-General



Leia Tsao
Director-General

Hugo Lam
Chief of Staff

Pradyun Chebolu
Director of Logistics



Emmy Wang
USG General Assemblies

Angelina Yeung
USG Specialized Agencies

Daniel Cao
USG Committees

Daniel Zhang
USG Operations

Geoffrey Yee
USG Conference

George Sun
USG Finance



Jenna Jaffer
USG Delegate Affairs

Derek Li
USG Delegate Affairs

Krisalyn Yeung
USG Design & Media

Dear Delegates,

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.

When our Founding Fathers inscribed those words on the historic Declaration of Independence, they also said: Welcome to the United States Senate at VMUN 2024. My name is Emily Mo, and I am an American Grade 12 student, or a senior, at Inglemoor High School in Seattle, Washington. I am ecstatic to be serving as your Director this year. I have been actively involved in Model United Nations since Grade 9 and also enjoy swimming, kungfu, business competitions, music, and other activities. On the weekends, I enjoy lighting fireworks and throwin' some patties on the grill with the fam.

Participating in MUN conferences has helped me build myself as a student, person, and, most importantly, an American. Beginning as a shy, naive, but still patriotic delegate, I was able to get carried away by the debate and diplomacy, something our founding fathers would be proud of. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it." Similarly, I'm a great believer in diplomacy, and I find that the more Model UN conferences I attend, the more I have of it. I hope that you will all find a similar learning experience this weekend and that I can guide you through your Model UN journey, regardless of your nationality.

Since the original Thirteen Colonies were established, the U.S. Senate has been an inclusive and patriotic committee that strives to bring both Democrats and Republicans (and the odd Independent) closer together to collaborate on pressing domestic issues. This year, we will be discussing the two topics of *Healthcare Reform* and *Public Education*. Both topics affect all states and engage Senators to find solutions to make the committee fruitful and productive. Whether you are a beginner, intermediate, or advanced delegate, I hope you will find something to contribute to the issue.

Joining me in this American experience is my amazing Dais team: the riveting Rishi Cherian and bombastic Betty Roberts. We are all die-hard patriots and cannot wait to get to know you at the conference.

If any questions or concerns arise, please do not hesitate to contact me at senate@vmun.com. Good luck with your research, and I look forward to seeing everyone in January!

Best,

Emily Mo
U.S. Senate Director

Position Paper Policy

What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For the United States Senate, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, their country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **11:59 PM PT on January 22, 2024**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email.

Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Researched award.

The email address for this committee is *senate@vmun.com*.

Healthcare Reform	3
Overview	3
Timeline	4
Historical Analysis.....	6
Past Action.....	7
Medicare and Medicaid	7
Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)	8
Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP)	9
The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA).....	9
Affordable Care Act (ACA)	10
Current Situation	10
Healthcare After COVID-19.....	11
Racial Discrimination in Healthcare	13
Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Technological Development.....	13
Healthcare Worker Shortage	14
Current State of Healthcare Systems	14
Possible Solutions and Controversies	15
Universal Healthcare System	15
Affordable Care Act (ACA) Expansion.....	16
Lowering Healthcare Costs	16
Bloc Positions	17
Republican Party	17
Democratic Party.....	18
Discussion Questions	20
Additional Resources	20
Bibliography	21
Public Education.....	24
Overview	24
Timeline	25
Historical Analysis.....	27
The Introduction of the Common School	27

Segregation in American Schools.....	27
Federal Legislation on Education.....	28
Post-Secondary Education in America.....	28
Past Involvement	29
Brown v. Board of Education.....	29
Higher Education Act (HEA)	30
Title IX of the Education Amendments Act (Title IX)	30
The American Teacher Act.....	31
Current Situation	31
Financial Challenges in the Education System.....	31
Teacher Shortage	32
Curriculum Restrictions.....	33
School Security and Safe Learning Environments.....	33
Quality Based on Income Levels	34
Lasting Effects of the Pandemic	34
Possible Solutions and Controversies	35
Moving Away from the Letter Grade System.....	35
Improving Accessibility to High-Quality Education.....	35
Changing the Education Work Culture	36
Banning Certain Topics in School	36
Increasing School Safety	37
Bloc Positions	37
Republican Party	37
Democratic Party.....	38
Discussion Questions	39
Additional Resources	40
Bibliography	41

Healthcare Reform

Overview

Healthcare reform significantly impacts the lives of Americans on a national scale. From addressing the continuously increasing costs of health care to ensuring high-quality care for all Americans, healthcare reform has significant implications for the well-being of the nation's population.¹

Central to this topic is citizens' access to affordable healthcare, which includes the coverage provided by private and public healthcare plans, the expansion of Medicaid, and the cost of medical services. Some senators believe that all individuals should have the ability to obtain necessary medical services without any financial barriers, while others believe that legislators should work to restrict the government's spending on the public. Alongside accessibility, the quality of healthcare is a crucial component of healthcare reform. Quality can be assured by improving a patient's experience through personalized care, streamlined communication, and empathy. Additionally, investing in comprehensive preventative services, such as routine screenings, vaccinations, and health education programs, can further contribute to improving healthcare outcomes for Americans.²

According to the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, American expenditure on healthcare has increased from five percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1960 to 18 percent in 2021.³ These rising costs affect businesses that provide healthcare benefits to their employees and may force them to set limitations on their offered advantages. As such, cost containment and the long-term sustainability of the healthcare system continue to be prevalent issues. High prescription drug prices and other administrative costs decide the fate of many American citizens.

Another current issue in America's healthcare systems is unequal access to healthcare. Race, family background, income level, and geographical location result in health care disparities that impede justice and fairness in the healthcare system. With many issues in the healthcare system, it is difficult for Senators to decide how the United States should treat healthcare for the country's various marginalized communities.

Overall, it is important that the United States allows its citizens to receive necessary medical attention, which can, in turn, lead to stronger health outcomes across the country. Quality patient-centered care and cost containment (restricting costs of care to affordable rates) of healthcare are equally important. They shed light on the balance required between government spending and equitable access to the system. To effectively address the issue of healthcare reform within the United States, Senators will need to carefully consider this balance by drafting bills that improve access to healthcare while limiting government spending as much as possible.

¹ "Fact Sheet: Republicans Support Protections for Patients with Pre-Existing Conditions," *United State House Committee on Ways and Means*, September 29, 2020, waysandmeans.house.gov/fact-sheet-republicans-support-protections-for-patients-with-pre-existing-conditions/.

² "Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC)*, June 27, 2022, www.cdc.gov/php/publications/topic/hipaa.html.

³ "Why Are Americans Paying More For Healthcare?" *Peter G. Peterson Foundation*, January 20, 2023, <https://www.pgpf.org/blog/2023/01/why-are-americans-paying-more-for-healthcare>.

Timeline

August 14, 1935 — President Roosevelt signs the Social Security Act, establishing a limited form of healthcare for certain vulnerable populations. This legislation went on to pave the way for future healthcare reform.⁴

January 11, 1944 — In his State of the Union address, President Roosevelt declares that all Americans should enjoy equal access to medical care through the Economic Bill of Rights.⁵

March 31, 1955 — The Revenue Act of 1954 is passed, which creates a setback for workers' accessibility to healthcare by excluding employers' contributions to employee health plans from taxable income. This adds to financial pressure on the American worker.⁶

July 30, 1965 — President Johnson signs the Medicare (health insurance for individuals aged 65 and older) and Medicaid (healthcare for low-income individuals and families) programs into law.⁷

January 1974 — The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program is created and provides cash assistance to elderly and disabled patients. This program mandates states to either cover program recipients or give coverage to them under Medicaid.⁸

August 13, 1981 — The Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981 is signed by President Reagan, making Medicaid more accessible for many citizens. The act required states to make Medicaid payments to hospitals with a majority of low-income patients and manage the care of groups at home who need long-term care.⁹

March 9, 1986 — The Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA) is passed. The act mandates hospitals to provide emergency medical services regardless of a patient's ability to pay. EMTALA also aims to prevent "patient dumping"—when hospitals release low-income patients on the streets rather than retaining them—and ensure that emergency care is available to everyone.¹⁰

September 22, 1993 — President Clinton proposes a comprehensive healthcare reform plan known as the Health Security Act. The act provides universal coverage, a standard benefit package, structured competition among health insurance plans, increased consumer choice of health plans, and provisions for Medicaid beneficiaries. The plan faced significant opposition and failed to gain enough support to pass Congress.¹¹

⁴ "Historical Background and Development of Social Security," *The United States Social Security Administration*, <https://www.ssa.gov/history/briefhistory3.html>.

⁵ "Timeline: History of Health Reform in the U.S.," *The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation*, <https://www.kff.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/5-02-13-history-of-health-reform.pdf>.

⁶ "Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America," *Internal Revenue Code of 1954*, Jan. 6, 1954, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-68/pdf/STATUTE-68A-Pg1.pdf>.

⁷ "Medicare and Medicaid Act (1965)," *National Archives*, February 8, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/medicare-and-medicaid-act>.

⁸ "Supplemental Security Income Program Description and Legislative History," *Social Security Office of Retirement and Disability Policy*, <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2012/ssi.html#>.

⁹ John A. Svahn, "Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981: Legislative History and Summary of OASDI and Medicare Provisions," *Social Security Bulletin*, October, 1981, <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v44n10/v44n10p3.pdf>.

¹⁰ "Emergency Medical Treatment & Labor Act (EMTALA)," *Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services*, <https://www.cms.gov/regulations-and-guidance/legislation/emtala>.

¹¹ "Health Care Reform Initiative," *Clinton Digital Presidential Library*, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/health-reform-initiative>.

2001 — President Bush launches the Health Center Growth Initiative (HCGI) which significantly increased the amount of health centers helping the underserved. This initiative aimed to create 1,200 new access points and serve 6 million individuals.¹²

March 23, 2010 — President Obama signs the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) into law. The ACA expands access to healthcare through various provisions, including the establishment of health insurance marketplaces and the expansion of Medicaid. The law also includes regulations such as the prohibition of pre-existing condition exclusions.¹³

June 28, 2012 — The Supreme Court upholds the constitutionality of the ACA in the landmark case *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*. This ruling solidifies the legality of the ACA and allows for its continued implementation.¹⁴

2017 — Multiple attempts by the Trump administration and the Republican-controlled Congress to repeal and replace the ACA fail to pass Congress due to a lack of support. Moderate Republicans, such as Senators Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski, and John McCain vote in favour of the ACA.¹⁵

2020 — The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of accessible healthcare by exposing gaps in coverage and disparities in healthcare access. More than 8 million individuals died in 2020 as a result of healthcare inadequacies.¹⁶

March 11, 2021 — President Biden signs the American Rescue Plan Act, providing additional subsidies and expanding eligibility for health insurance coverage under the ACA. The act aims to make healthcare more affordable and accessible to a broader population.¹⁷

2022–2023 — As it has been for the last decade, proposals for universal healthcare, Medicare expansion, and other healthcare reforms continue to be discussed at the state and federal levels. Information about family and patient healthcare quality and safety is currently being discussed, but this progress is only a small part of the system's vast issues.¹⁸

¹² Shi L, Lebrun LA, Tsai J, "Assessing the Impact of the Health Center Growth Initiative on Health Center Patients," *Public Health Rep*, March, 2010, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2821854/>.

¹³ "Health Care that Works for Americans," *The White House - President Barack Obama*, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/healthreform/healthcare-overview>.

¹⁴ "National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius (2012)," *Cornell Law School*, [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/national_federation_of_independent_business_v._sebelius_\(2012\)](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/national_federation_of_independent_business_v._sebelius_(2012)).

¹⁵ Susan Davis and Domenico Montanaro, "McCain Votes No, Dealing Potential Death Blow To Republican Health Care Efforts," *NPR*, July 27, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/07/27/539907467/senate-careens-toward-high-drama-midnight-health-care-vote>.

¹⁶ Kruk ME, Gage AD, Joseph NT, Danaei G, García-Saisó S, Salomon JA, "Mortality Due To Low-Quality Health Systems In The Universal Health Coverage Era: A Systematic Analysis Of Amenable Deaths In 137 Countries," *National Library of Medicine*, November 17, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6238021/>.

¹⁷ "The Impact of the American Rescue Plan Act after One Year," *U.S. Department of the Treasury*, March 09, 2022, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy0645>.

¹⁸ "Guide to Patient and Family Engagement," Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, <https://www.ahrq.gov/research/findings/final-reports/ptfamilyscan/ptfamily4.html>.

Historical Analysis

Advocacy for healthcare reform can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The rise of factory work came with new health risks, leaving many workers vulnerable as there was limited access to affordable healthcare. As a result, some employers started offering healthcare benefits as a means to attract and retain workers, marking the emergence of the employer-based healthcare system.¹⁹

A few decades later, the Great Depression exposed significant shortcomings in the healthcare system as millions, many of whom were recently unemployed, struggled to afford medical care. Even though they desperately needed health services, paying for healthcare was entirely unattainable for most Americans who earned minimal income, if any. Hospitals were then forced into financial ruin, forcing them to close down and further worsening the quality of America's healthcare system overall.²⁰ A few years into the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected into the government. He promised to "bring back America's happy days" through the New Deal—a series of economic and social reforms that created new jobs and opportunities for Americans.²¹ Once these citizens were back on their feet, President Roosevelt worked towards further improvements. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act of 1935, which established a framework for social insurance, including elderly pensions and unemployment benefits.²² However, the act did not encompass universal healthcare, continuing affordability issues within the healthcare system.

Following World War II, the United States experienced significant economic growth, and the employer-based healthcare system expanded further.²³ The federal government provided tax incentives to employers who offered health benefits, further entrenching the employer-based model.²⁴ This approach quickly became the dominant means of accessing healthcare for the majority of Americans.²⁵

The establishment of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 under President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration aimed to provide healthcare coverage for vulnerable populations.²⁶ Medicare provided coverage for Americans aged 65 and older, while Medicaid offered healthcare assistance for low-income individuals and families.²⁷ However, these programs had a limited effect on improving healthcare affordability as they focused only on specific demographics. They did not address the broader issue of universal healthcare or fundamentally change the employer-based system.

¹⁹ "Origins and Evolution of Employment-Based Health Benefits," *National Library of Medicine*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK235989/>.

²⁰ Bryce Butzer, "Born From The Great Depression, A Continued Promise To Protect The Sustainability Of Health Care Costs," *Bluecross Blueshield*, <https://blog.bluecrossmn.com/future-of-health-care/born-from-the-great-depression-a-continued-promise-to-protect-the-sustainability-of-health-care-costs/>.

²¹ "What Was Franklin D. Roosevelt's Campaign Slogan?" *Study.com*, <https://homework.study.com/explanation/what-was-franklin-d-roosevelt-s-campaign-slogan.html>.

²² "Historical Background and Development of Social Security," *The United States Social Security Administration*, <https://www.ssa.gov/history/briefhistory3.html>.

²³ Joseph Schumpeter, "Origins and Evolution of Employment-Based Health Benefits," *National Library of Medicine*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK235989/>.

²⁴ Aaron E Carroll, "The Real Reason the U.S. Has Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance," *The New York Times*, September 5, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/05/upshot/the-real-reason-the-us-has-employer-sponsored-health-insurance.html>.

²⁵ Alex Blumberg and Adam Davidson, "Accidents of History Created U.S. Health System," *NPR*, October 22, 2009, <https://www.npr.org/2009/10/22/114045132/accidents-of-history-created-u-s-health-system>.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "Medicare and Medicaid Act (1965)," *National Archives*, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/medicare-and-medicaid-act>.

In subsequent decades, numerous attempts were made to achieve comprehensive healthcare reform in the United States. Presidents and policymakers from both major political parties proposed various reform initiatives but often encountered significant opposition and debate. A notable example can be seen in President Bill Clinton's proposed healthcare plan in the 1990s, which aimed to provide universal coverage but ultimately failed to gain sufficient support.²⁸ It is unclear what the exact reason is for the plan's failure, but it is often attributed to anti-government sentiments held by conservative lawmakers, the deficit the U.S. was in at the time, and Clinton's declining popularity among liberals due to various political scandals.²⁹ Similarly, President Carter's attempt to expand healthcare coverage was foiled by stagflation and rapidly rising healthcare costs. The recession further stalled all healthcare efforts until later years.³⁰ This made the Affordable Care Act (ACA), signed into law in 2010 under President Barack Obama, a significant milestone in healthcare reform by expanding access to healthcare through measures such as the individual mandate, health insurance marketplaces, and Medicaid expansion.³¹

The ACA succeeded where others failed because of the country's shared vision in the plan's efforts as well as the need for comprehensive healthcare reform.³² Obama was able to combine liberal wants of increasing health services and the conservative idea of market competition into the act, which made it more palatable for both sides.³³ In addition, because so many efforts failed before the ACA, U.S. representatives and citizens were both more receptive to adopting some form of change.

From the employer-based healthcare system of the Industrial Revolution to the introduction of government programs like Medicare and Medicaid, the American healthcare system has undergone gradual changes over time. Despite various attempts at comprehensive reform, achieving universal healthcare coverage remains a contentious issue.

Past Action

Medicare and Medicaid

Medicare and Medicaid were established by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 30, 1965. Enacted officially as the Medicare and Medicaid Act, or the Social Security Amendments of 1965, they later became known to be two of the most impactful programs affecting American health systems.³⁴

Medicare is a healthcare insurance program for the elderly. Americans aged 65 or older are given the option to apply for the program and receive its multitude of benefits, including but not limited to hospital stays, access to

²⁸ "Health Care Reform Initiative," *Clinton Digital Presidential Library*, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/health-reform-initiative>.

²⁹ Brady DW, Kessler DP, "Why is health reform so difficult?," *J Health Polit Policy Law*, 2010 Apr, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3195449/>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Health Care that Works for Americans," *The White House - President Barack Obama*, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/healthreform/healthcare-overview>.

³² David Simas, "Why We Passed the Affordable Care Act in the First Place," *The White House President Barack Obama*, October 13, 2013, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2013/10/30/why-we-passed-affordable-care-act-first-place/>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ "Medicare and Medicaid Act (1965)," *National Archives*, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/medicare-and-medicaid-act#>.

nursing facilities, drug prescriptions, and preventive services.³⁵ It is particularly significant because there was no designated health care insurance plan for the elderly before the passage of this law, and many seniors did not have access to employer-based insurance.³⁶ Before the program, individuals would lose their insurance once they retired. After Medicare, Americans can remain insured and have access to healthcare for the rest of their lives.

Medicaid is a health insurance program for low-income individuals. To qualify, applicants must be below a certain income level and meet certain qualities set by each individual state. These qualities take into account factors such as household size, income level, and other living circumstances. By being in the program, these communities are able to access a wide range of healthcare services at an affordable price.³⁷ Compared to uninsured individuals, Medicaid participants are much less likely to postpone or go without needed care due to cost, preventing countless individuals' health issues from worsening.³⁸ To this day, 86.7 million people are covered through Medicaid.³⁹

Both programs have equal importance in making healthcare more accessible and affordable for those in need. Without the programs, many minority groups cannot access proper care.

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) was established in 1996 and created standards for patient information. It prevented healthcare client information from being shared by unauthorized personnel—increasing the individual's protection and privacy. This law only allows patient information to be shared with the patient's consent and knowledge, creating a different type of healthcare reform that does not directly correspond to physical health services but rather the privacy of health services.⁴⁰

This type of reform affected confidentiality and compliance in the healthcare industry and made healthcare more reliable for all. Information could no longer be tampered with by unauthorized individuals, and standards were created for all entities dealing with healthcare information. This includes healthcare providers, health plans, healthcare clearinghouses, business associates, and more. The standards known as "Privacy Rule Standards" were established, and patients could feel secure using healthcare services.

Balanced Budget Act of 1997

In response to the major spending on Medicare and the increasing federal budget deficit in the late 1990s, President Bill Clinton passed the Balanced Budget Act of 1997.⁴¹ It aimed to reduce federal spending by cutting

³⁵ "What's Medicare?" *Medicare.gov*, <https://www.medicare.gov/what-medicare-covers/your-medicare-coverage-choices/whats-medicare#>.

³⁶ "The History of Medicare," *National Academy of Social Insurance*, <https://www.nasi.org/learn/medicare/the-history-of-medicare/>.

³⁷ "Medicaid," *Medicaid.gov*, <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/index.html>.

³⁸ "Why Medicaid is Important," *Cancer Action Network*, https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/docs/final-why-medicaid_is_important_01.09.20.pdf.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ "Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*, June 27, 2022, www.cdc.gov/phlp/publications/topic/hipaa.html.

⁴¹ Andy Schneider, "Overview of Medicaid Provisions in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, P.L. 105-33," *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, Sept 8, 1997, www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/archive/908mcaid.htm.

some funding for Medicare and public healthcare programs. This act created foundational changes to the Medicare program and healthcare industry by welcoming more private healthcare providers.

By reducing federal provisions for Medicaid, state minimum reimbursement rates for community healthcare centers were eliminated, and payment reforms were made to cut costs. The rates that had once boosted Medicaid and restricted private healthcare firms disappeared, so these firms had the opportunity to become more competitive. The spending restrictions on federal healthcare programs forced them to adapt and minimize operations to reduce costs.⁴² As a result, private healthcare businesses were able to compete with Medicare and bridge the gap caused by their differences in funding. Both private and public healthcare providers were significantly affected; Medicaid no longer ruled the industry, and other firms had the opportunity to boost their operations. Beyond having to change health providers, patients saw minimal change and still received the same services.

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

The reduced budget for Medicare providers from the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 significantly lowered the maximum income levels to qualify for Medicare programs.⁴³ Consequently, millions of children no longer qualified for its benefits, but they still required its services to survive. To fill this role, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was established by Congress for children with family incomes too high for Medicaid and too low for private healthcare programs.⁴⁴

Passed as a joint effort by federal and state officials, the program helps low-income children and pregnant women specifically. Both must pass the requirements of being a U.S. citizen or meeting immigration requirements, be uninsured, and be below the maximum income level for "low-income" individuals, which varies by state.⁴⁵ The minimum can be as low as 140 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or as high as 400 percent of the FPL. Currently, more than 9.6 million children are enrolled.⁴⁶ Reforms made to CHIP allowed its services to be more comprehensive across the country.

The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA)

Implemented during the 2008 Financial Crisis, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) expanded on healthcare information security provisions made by the HIPAA. It focused specifically on health information technology and included provisions protecting healthcare information known as the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH).⁴⁷ HITECH provisions expand on security regulations made by the HIPAA and involve harsher criminal penalties for violations of this act.

⁴² Nelda McCall, "Reforming Medicare Payment: Early Effects Of The 1997 Balanced Budget Act On Postacute Care," *National Library of Medicine*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2690212/>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "CHIP Eligibility," *Medicaid.gov*, www.medicare.gov/chip/eligibility/index.html.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ "Home CHIP Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)," *Medicaid.gov*, www.medicare.gov/chip/index.html.

⁴⁷ "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and HITECH Amendments Summary of Privacy Provisions." *DHA Privacy and Civil Liberties Office*, May, 2022, www.health.mil/Reference-Center/Fact-Sheets/2022/05/01/Info-Paper-American-Recovery-and-Reinvestment-Act-ARRA-of-2009.

Moreover, ARRA created financial incentives for organizations to adopt safer healthcare information protection practices. For instance, adopting electronic health records (EHRs) was promoted and became known to make businesses more efficient, increasing revenue and operations.⁴⁸ As a whole, ARRA was meant to revisit outdated standards from HIPAA and keep healthcare programs safe in the developing world. It kept providers ethical, preventing them from treating patients unfairly and reinvesting more time into healthcare services.

Affordable Care Act (ACA)

Regarded as one of the most important healthcare-related acts since the establishment of Medicaid and Medicare, the Affordable Care Act created reforms that made healthcare more accessible, affordable, and applicable. Notable improvements in this act include lowering health insurance qualifying levels to make them more inclusive and supporting initiatives that make healthcare generally less expensive.⁴⁹ For instance, it expanded eligibility for Medicaid and created Health Insurance marketplaces, which allowed for better services and plans that fit individual citizen's needs.⁵⁰ Subsidized plans were offered for low-income families, and more comprehensive services were offered for those who had more health issues.⁵¹

The impacts of these reforms are vast and extensive for every part of the nation's healthcare system to this day. Some examples of its benefits can be seen when the ACA lowered the domestic uninsured rate in 2010 and transformed Medicare payment systems to more efficient methods.⁵² Also known as PPACA or "Obamacare," the ACA is a consequential law that continues to affect the current healthcare system significantly.

Current Situation

Despite repeated efforts to provide Americans with affordable and accessible healthcare, the cost of healthcare has continued to rise drastically. Issues such as inflation, healthcare-worker shortages, and residual effects from the COVID-19 pandemic leave Americans spending an average of \$12,914 per capita each year with the cost only rising further.⁵³ As pressure from the public increases and the Senate works to provide cost effective healthcare for all Americans, approaches for resolving healthcare differ across the aisle, with Republicans supporting privatized health care systems and Democrats supporting universal health care systems.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Barack Obama, "United States Health Care Reform: Progress to Date and Next Steps," *JAMA*, August 2, 2016 ;316(5):525-32. doi: 10.1001/jama.2016.9797. PMID:27400401; PMCID: PMC5069435.

⁵⁰ "Understanding the Affordable Care Act: A Comprehensive Guide," *eHealth*, August 13, 2023, <https://www.ehealthinsurance.com/resources/affordable-care-act/understanding-the-aca>.

⁵¹ "Explaining Health Care Reform: Questions About Health Insurance Subsidies," *KFF*, October 6, 2023.

<https://www.kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/explaining-health-care-reform-questions-about-health-insurance-subsidies/>.

⁵² "Affordable Care Act (ACA)," *Healthcare.gov*, www.healthcare.gov/glossary/affordable-care-act/.

⁵³ "The State of The U.S. Health System in 2022 and The Outlook For 2023," *Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker*, 2022, <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/brief/the-state-of-the-u-s-health-system-in-2022-and-the-outlook-for-2023/>.

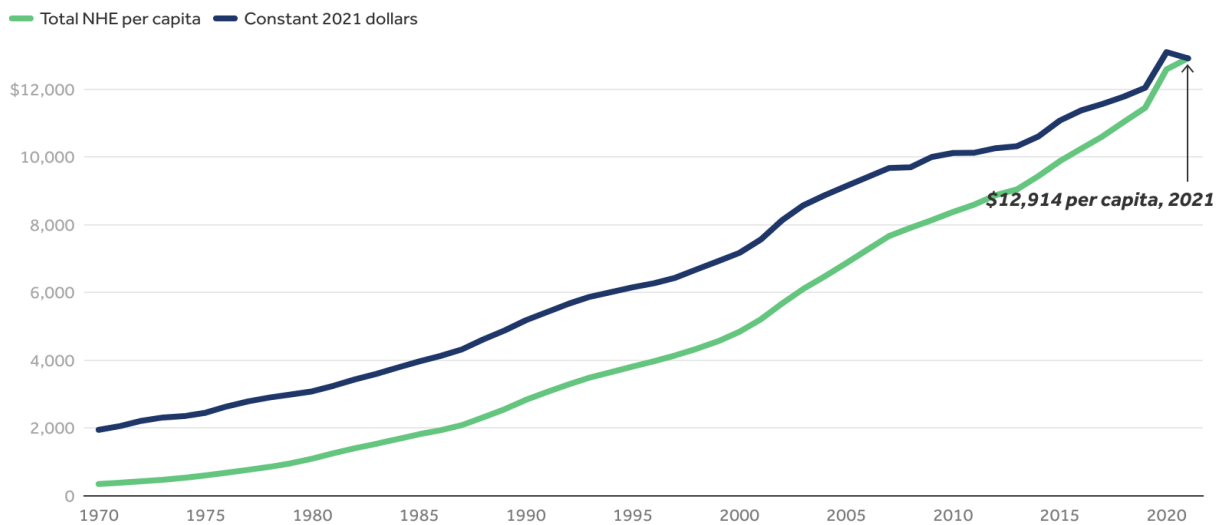
⁵⁴ Glen Whitman, "Bending the Productivity Curve: Why America Leads the World in Medical Innovation," *Cato Institute*, November 18, 2009, <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/bending-productivity-curve-why-america-leads-world-medical-innovation>

Healthcare After COVID-19

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, healthcare expenses in the United States were already gradually rising. However, the pandemic exposed deficiencies in the country’s healthcare system and revealed the inadequacy of medical resource distribution and healthcare coverage.

Despite the United States’ developments prior to the pandemic in pharmaceuticals and technology, vaccination rates among different communities exhibited significant inequalities in accessibility. For example, from December 14, 2020, to April 10, 2021, a study by the CDC revealed that only 39% of rural adults received the vaccine, while their urban counterparts had a higher rate of 46% of vaccinated adults.⁵⁵

Total national health expenditures, US \$ per capita, 1970-2021



Note: A constant dollar is an inflation adjusted value used to compare dollar values from one period to another.

Source: KFF analysis of National Health Expenditure (NHE) data

Peterson-KFF
Health System Tracker

Figure 1: Total national health expenditures in the United States.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Bhavini Patel Murthy, “Disparities in Covid-19 Vaccination Coverage between Urban and Rural Counties - United States, December 14, 2020–April 10, 2021.” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, May 20, 2021, https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7020e3.htm?s_cid=mm7020e3_w#F2_down.

⁵⁶ Shameek Rakshit, Matthew McGough, Emma Wager Twitter, Krutika Amin Twitter, “How Has U.S. Spending on Healthcare Changed Over Time?” *Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker*, February 7, 2023, <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/u-s-spending-healthcare-changed-time/>.

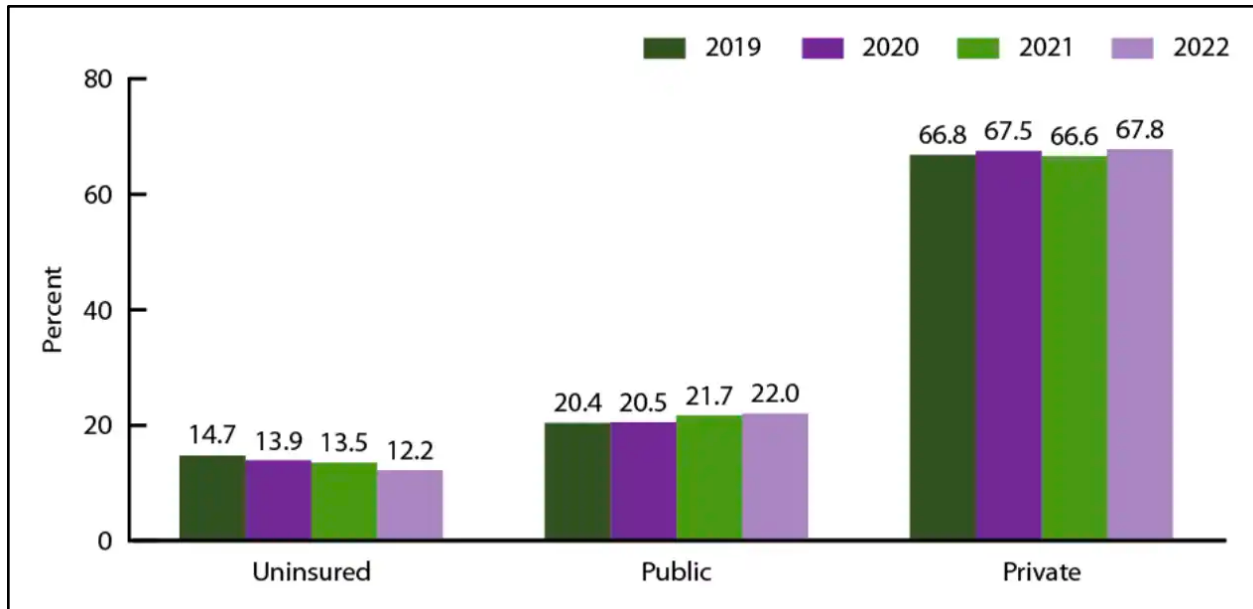


Figure 2: Percentage of adults aged 18–64 who were uninsured or had public or private coverage, by year (2019–2022).⁵⁷

In addition to this, during the pandemic, nearly 9.6 million Americans lost their jobs and the healthcare coverage that came with them.⁵⁸ As a result, Americans had to change their healthcare from private employer sponsored insurance (ESI) to public insurance like Medicare, Medicaid, or military coverage. This transition from private to public led one in five Americans in 2021 to go without needed medical care due to cost of insurance.⁵⁹

Businesses such as telehealth and care-delivery services outside of the hospital also grew dramatically during the pandemic.⁶⁰ Pressure from hospitals flooding with patients suffering from COVID-19 placed strains on the healthcare community, leading Americans to seek healthcare in more accessible and affordable ways.⁶¹ Before March 2020, telemedicine was largely underused as patients and providers found difficulties using the service. As the pandemic forced Americans to stay home, telehealth and telemedicine became an integral part of American healthcare and largely replaced non-urgent in-person care.⁶² Services like diagnostic testing and therapy transitioned to video calls, and patients discovered that these remote services actually had an effect. For basic services, virtual visits offered a quality of treatment equal to that offered in-person.⁶³

⁵⁷ “U.S. Uninsured Rate Dropped 18% during Pandemic,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, May 16, 2023, https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2023/202305.htm.

⁵⁸ Jesse Bennett, “Fewer Jobs Have Been Lost in the EU than in the U.S. during the COVID-19 Downturn.” *Pew Research Center*, April 15, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2021/04/15/fewer-jobs-have-been-lost-in-the-eu-than-in-the-u-s-during-the-covid-19-downturn/>.

⁵⁹ Jennifer Tolbert, “Key Facts about the Uninsured Population,” *KFF*, December 19, 2022, <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/issue-brief/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>.

⁶⁰ Shubham Singhal, “Future of U.S. healthcare post-COVID-19,” *McKinsey & Company*, July 19, 2022, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare/our-insights/the-future-of-us-healthcare-whats-next-for-the-industry-post-covid-19>.

⁶¹ John Geyman, “COVID-19 Has Revealed America’s Broken Health Care System: What Can We Learn?,” *Sage Journals*, January 12, 2021, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0020731420985640>.

⁶² Julia Shaver, “The State of Telehealth before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Primary Care: Clinics in Office Practice*, April 25, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pop.2022.04.002>.

⁶³ “Telehealth, Telemedicine, and Telecare: What’s What?” *Federal Communications Commissions*, <https://www.fcc.gov/general/telehealth-telemedicine-and-telecare-whats-what>.

Racial Discrimination in Healthcare

The pandemic has also exacerbated access barriers and highlighted the health inequities experienced by people of colour.⁶⁴ In health care settings, more people of colour have reported discrimination and inadequate services compared to white people. Racial inequities in healthcare access affect the quality of care given to patients and thus, caused death rates of racialized communities during the pandemic to be substantially higher than white communities.⁶⁵

This racial discrimination has rooted from American history and beliefs. For instance, older textbooks preach that women of colour feel less pain—which is entirely untrue. These teachings hindered drug testing and caused racial discrimination towards these marginalized communities.

Overall, racial discrimination has been identified in healthcare services, but little has been done as the extent of the disruption caused by discrimination is largely unknown. Although more than 15 percent of Asians, Hispanics, and non-Hispanic Blacks reported some sort of discrimination related to healthcare during the pandemic, the issue is not widely debated or known today.⁶⁶ While some healthcare systems have strived to combat these inequalities—through implicit bias training and including black illustrations in medical textbooks—these actions are not nearly enough.⁶⁷ Due to racial discrimination and inequalities, American healthcare is unable to reach its full potential of providing equal services for all.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Technological Development

In the healthcare industry, AI is now being used in a multitude of ways. For instance, radiographers and physicians are using it to conduct research, quickly diagnose diseases, and discover new drugs.⁶⁸ AI allows these individuals to create mass detection scenarios and replace experiments with simulations, making processes more efficient and much less expensive.⁶⁹ The time and money saved then go to various efforts in health systems that require funding, like proper training for medical workers, vaccination and other drug production, and distribution of health resources.

Virtual reality is also becoming increasingly common in the healthcare industry. To cut down on time and money, colleges such as George Washington University and the University of Connecticut have used this tool to provide training and experiences for students.⁷⁰ It provides students with the valuable experience of simulating

⁶⁴ Hanna Dingel, Emma Wager Twitter, Matthew McGough, Shameek Rakshit, Imani Telesford, Hope Schwartz Twitter, Cynthia Cox Twitter, Krutika Amin Twitter, “The State of the U.S. Health System in 2022 and the Outlook for 2023,” *Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker*, December 22, 2022, <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/brief/the-state-of-the-u-s-health-system-in-2022-and-the-outlook-for-2023/#Total%20deaths%20in%20the%20United%20States%20from%20COVID-19%20and%20other%20leading%20causes,%202020-2022>.

⁶⁵ “The Association of Reported Experiences of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in Health Care with COVID-19 Vaccination Status and Intent — United States, April 22, 2021–November 26, 2022,” *Center for Disease Controls and Prevention*, April 21, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7216a5.htm>.

⁶⁶ Zhang Donglan, “Association Between Racial Discrimination and Delayed or Forgone Care Amid The Covid-19 Pandemic,” *National Library of Medicine*, July 7, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9259552/>

⁶⁷ Joe Feagin, Zinobia Bennefield, “Systemic Racism and U.S. Health Care,” *Social Science & amp*, February, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.09.006>.

⁶⁸ Thomas Liji, “Recent Developments in Health Technology,” *Medical News*, 2022, <https://www.news-medical.net/health/Recent-Developments-in-Health-Technology.aspx>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Diya Li, “How Virtual Reality Is Transforming Healthcare,” *U.S. Chamber of Commerce*, July 7, 2022, <https://www.uschamber.com/technology/how-virtual-reality-is-transforming-healthcare>.

surgeries firsthand and understanding the processes of each surgery. They give the student applicable knowledge in the real-world, like familiarity with surgical procedures and improved surgical efficiency. This allows them to provide better care and services to patients. The benefits of virtual reality can be seen across individuals in the healthcare industry.

Healthcare Worker Shortage

Regardless of technological advancements in the healthcare industry, healthcare providers are unable to provide adequate services without their personnel. A rising issue that has arisen in discussions is the decrease in new individuals entering the industry. For instance, some project that by 2034, there will only be 124,000 physicians in the United States, which will not be nearly enough for the nearly 400 million residents there are predicted to be by that time.⁷¹ This has raised significant concerns for the future of American healthcare.

Many students find the cost of higher education too high or have difficulty completing the right training considering the limited amount of spaces offered.⁷² In 2021, 91,938 qualified applications were turned away because of a shortage of classroom spaces, insufficient faculty, and a lack of other learning resources like teacher-assistants or mentors to help applicants through with their learning.⁷³ Many hospitals and healthcare services are unable to receive a sufficient number of nurses because of the lack of education. The combination of limited residency opportunities and the aging population of healthcare workers leaves the system with fewer doctors available.⁷⁴ This widespread healthcare crisis leaves already strained medical resources even more unavailable and exclusive.

Current State of Healthcare Systems

American healthcare currently continues to run on both public and private systems. Public providers include free or low-cost insurance programs like Medicare and Medicaid; private providers include care plans that are paid for and not covered by the U.S. government.

Medicare and Medicaid continue to serve aging and low-income populations, although both programs are starting to change as the population grows and circumstances change.⁷⁵ Regarding Medicare, there have been talks about lowering the funding of the program and removing it entirely, but President Biden and House Speaker McCarthy have prevented this from happening.⁷⁶ There have also been discussions surrounding Medicare's funding, as it is currently on track to have no funding by 2030; as a result, 70% of recipients may no longer receive long term care.⁷⁷ Regarding Medicaid, there have also been issues with reduced participant

⁷¹ Jacqueline Howard, "Concern Grows around U.S. Health-Care Workforce Shortage: 'We Don't Have Enough Doctors.'" *CNN*, May 16, 2023, www.cnn.com/2023/05/16/health/health-care-worker-shortage/index.html.

⁷² Kevin Jubbal, "America's Doctor Shortage Explained," *Med School Insiders*, July 16, 2022, <https://medschoolinsiders.com/pre-med/americas-doctor-shortage-explained/>.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Jennifer Tolbert, "10 Things to Know About the Unwinding of the Medicaid Continuous Enrollment Provision," *KFF*, June 9, 2023, <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/10-things-to-know-about-the-unwinding-of-the-medicare-continuous-enrollment-provision/>.

⁷⁶ Jeannie Biniek, "Is the Biden Administration Proposing Cuts to Medicare Advantage?" *KFF*, February 17, 2023, <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/is-the-biden-administration-proposing-cuts-to-medicare-advantage>.

⁷⁷ Adam Hardy, "Medicare Won't Have Enough Money to Pay Full Benefits After 2031:Report," *Money*, April 5, 2023, <https://money.com/medicare-running-out-of-money-2031/#>.

eligibility in this program. In fact, an estimated 8 to 24 million people may lose their coverage as a result of these changes.⁷⁸ At times, public coverage is not enough, which is why individuals look to private healthcare providers.

By purchasing health insurance and services from private companies, individuals can receive more personalized services, protected personal information, and comprehensive services based on how much they spend. The quality of services still varies depending on the amount an individual spends on their healthcare, which alienates low-income communities.

About 18% of the hospitals in the United States are public hospitals which are funded by the government and generally provide affordable services to individuals regardless of ability to pay; public hospitals include federal hospitals, state hospitals, Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals, and county, city, or teaching hospitals. On the other hand, private hospitals, which are owned by private agencies or corporations, provide 70% of hospital beds in the US.⁷⁹ Although private hospitals offer patients a wider range of amenities and advanced healthcare services in some cases, they receive criticism for high costs and selective admission standards. This allows private hospitals to have higher profit margins and invest into more advanced technology, but it prevents vulnerable, low-income populations from accessing care putting more strain on public hospitals. As a result, public and private hospitals differ in terms of financial solvency, access to care, and quality of care.⁸⁰

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Universal Healthcare System

Universal healthcare provides healthcare coverage for all citizens, reducing the number of uninsured individuals. Many left leaning American citizens favour this idea because it could improve health outcomes for the overall population, reduce healthcare disparities, and simplify the healthcare system. Nations like Denmark and France who have adopted universal healthcare have seen positive results. For example, in 2015, Denmark spent 10.4 percent of its GDP on healthcare compared to the United States which spent 17.2 percent of its GDP on healthcare.⁸¹ Through adopting the universal healthcare system, Denmark has been able to more effectively allocate money towards the healthcare system while also providing all its citizens with sufficient services. Although universal healthcare has many benefits, the implementation of the program is difficult and expensive. Additionally, universal healthcare could disrupt potential technological innovations and the free market.⁸² Some right leaning individuals believe that further government involvement in healthcare will contribute to healthcare issues including decreased flexibility for patients to choose from different drugs, minimized competition amongst providers, and high costs for healthcare funding. Those against universal healthcare in the U.S. also highlight the difficulties of implementation in such a heterogeneous country as the many different cultures and beliefs may not allow one service to fit all citizens.

⁷⁸ "Why Millions May Be Kicked Off Medicaid In 2023 And What To Do If You Lose Coverage," *PBS*, February 26, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/why-millions-may-be-kicked-off-medicaid-in-2023-and-what-to-do-if-you-lose-coverage>.

⁷⁹ "Fast Facts on U.S. Hospitals, 2023," *American Hospital Association*, <https://www.aha.org/statistics/fast-facts-us-hospitals>

⁸⁰ Florian Kruse, "Do Private Hospitals Outperform Public Hospitals Regarding Efficiency, Accessibility, and Quality of Care in The European Union? A Literature Review," *National Library of Medicine*, March 2, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6033142/>

⁸¹ "7 Facts about Healthcare in Denmark," *The Borgen Project*, 2020, <https://borgenproject.org/healthcare-in-denmark/>.

⁸² "Universal Healthcare Pros and Cons," *ProCon.org*, <https://healthcare.procon.org/>.

Affordable Care Act (ACA) Expansion

Similar to universal healthcare, an expansion of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) could double the amount of people receiving affordable healthcare coverage. ACA expansion leaves the decision of health coverage to individual states rather than having an umbrella coverage, which is the case with universal healthcare. Although an expansion of the ACA could provide greater coverage, especially for those who have preexisting conditions, it would require significant funding and bipartisan support.⁸³ Difficulties faced in the past with Medicaid expansion are likely to be similar to difficulties with an ACA expansion; these issues mainly revolve around respecting state sovereignty and actually delivering healthcare to American citizens, among other issues. Yet, ACA has been expanded in the past, with forty states expanding Medicaid eligibility to people with incomes up to 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.⁸⁴ In other words, these states raised the maximum income level of Medicaid participants to allow more individuals to qualify and receive benefits. If the Senate attempts to expand the ACA again, it would require bipartisan support and agreement to provide coverage for the most vulnerable Americans.

Health Insurance Market Reforms

Outside of federal healthcare, another approach to supporting Americans is through health insurance market reforms. If the health insurance industry is changed, competition, transparency, and consumer choice could be enhanced, allowing for more coverage without expanding government responsibilities. Through these reforms, health insurance would be a choice given to the consumer, which could align them better with their provider.⁸⁵ Although private insurance is seen as a luxury opportunity, lowering premiums means that more Americans can experience benefits from private insurance such as shorter wait times and more individualized care.⁸⁶

Lowering Healthcare Costs

An alternative to expanding public healthcare operations while maintaining the quality of services is to work on lowering health insurance premium costs. By doing so, healthcare is more accessible to families and small businesses, which allows for more high-quality care in the long term.⁸⁷ Lowering healthcare costs can be done in a multitude of ways, including increasing government funding and promoting private provider competition to lower healthcare costs. However, such solutions may create less freedom in the healthcare industry and may be costly for governments. Ultimately, lowering costs associated with healthcare would allow more people to be insured. The health of the country would improve, and in turn, it could promote healthier lifestyles as more people became aware of the pros and cons of being insured.⁸⁸

⁸³ "Status of State Medicaid Expansion Decisions: Interactive Map" *KFF*, 2023, <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/status-of-state-medicaid-expansion-decisions-interactive-map/>.

⁸⁴ "Where Do the States Stand on Medicaid Expansion?" *Commonwealth Fund*, 2022, <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2022/where-do-states-stand-medicaid-expansion>.

⁸⁵ "Health Insurance Market Reforms." *CMS*, <https://www.cms.gov/ccio/programs-and-initiatives/health-insurance-market-reforms>.

⁸⁶ "Advantages and Disadvantages of Health Insurance," *Protective*, <https://www.protective.com/learn/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-health-insurance>.

⁸⁷ "Republicans' Common-Sense Reforms Will Lower Health Care Costs," *Simpson House*, <https://simpson.house.gov/uploadedfiles/summary.pdf>.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Bloc Positions

Republican Party

Republicans aim to reduce costs in the system while providing aid to those truly in need. The party recognizes the growing number of American patients requiring health care services, as well as the increasing impact it will have on federal budgets. To maintain these programs and the government's financial stability, Republicans aim to reduce healthcare spending by modernizing programs and subsequently reducing costs.⁸⁹

Medicare and Medicaid

Conservatives aim to reduce long-term Medicare debts by keeping services for people aged 55 and older unchanged. They aim to create greater options between traditional Medicare and other health care choices like health savings accounts, telemedicine, direct primary care, community health clinics, catastrophic insurance, healthcare sharing ministries, and Veterans Health Administration services. Medicare also increases security against fraud and abuse, and adjusts age eligibility requirements in light of America's current longer lifespan.⁹⁰ By implementing these reforms, Medicaid costs may possibly be reduced without having to put seniors and retired citizens at a disadvantage.

Regarding Medicare, Republicans have repeatedly tried to cut the service along with Social Security. They believe in privatizing one or both of the programs, which allows for better quality services and more funding for the providers. This has been rejected by the liberal agenda, which instead aims to strengthen both programs. In response, Republicans also attempted to raise the Social Security retirement age and Medicare eligibility age, which would allow the services to only go to those who truly needed them.

Republicans often advocate for Medicaid reforms centered on fiscal responsibility and state flexibility. Their approach may involve implementing block grants or per capita caps to control federal spending, allowing states more autonomy. Emphasizing work requirements for certain beneficiaries is another key aspect aimed at encouraging self-sufficiency. Critics argue these measures may lead to coverage reductions, while proponents believe they promote efficiency and innovation in the Medicaid system.⁹¹

Patients with Pre-Existing Conditions

Besides aging American citizens, Republicans also fight for those who require healthcare due to pre-existing conditions.⁹² This includes patients with asthma, diabetes, cancer, or similar conditions. Republicans believe these individuals should not be restricted from finding proper health insurance coverage. By supporting those with pre-existing conditions, health systems are able to increase transparency and choice while lowering

⁸⁹ "Fact Sheet: Republicans Support Protections for Patients with Pre-Existing Conditions," *United State House Committee on Ways and Means*, September 29, 2020, <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/fact-sheet-republicans-support-protections-for-patients-with-pre-existing-conditions>.

⁹⁰ "Republican and Democratic platforms on Health Care." *Physicians for a National Health Program*, <https://pnhp.org/news/republican-and-democratic-platforms-on-health-care/>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

costs.⁹³ Republicans believe Democrats need to affirm these beliefs into law immediately, as the liberal “one size fits all” pursuit robs communities of addressing the individual and unique needs of patients.⁹⁴

Affordable Care Act

Another Democratic reform that Republicans are highly critical of is the Affordable Care Act of 2010, also known as Obamacare.⁹⁵ Since its passage, conservatives have believed Obamacare to be unconstitutional with an improper individual mandate, as it does not provide alternatives or individual choice for other forms of healthcare.⁹⁶ This act is considered unworkable by Republican, who focus on lowering healthcare costs. Republicans highlight how Obamacare has dramatically increased insurance premiums and deductibles, leaving no time for client wages to keep pace. The ACA is consistently opposed by Republican congressmen, governors, and officials.⁹⁷ They vow to work against and eventually repeal the law.

Democratic Party

Although there are many different views on healthcare within the Democratic party—for instance, some want to expand public insurance programs and others support a transition into universal healthcare—Democrats generally aim to make healthcare both high-quality and affordable for all Americans. They disagree with Republicans on the extent to which healthcare should be provided. Democrats believe healthcare is not just limited to retirees and those with pre-existing conditions, but rather to any citizen who seeks the services.⁹⁸ This serves as most liberals’ first priority when it comes to the topic of healthcare, as they believe that both public and private healthcare should be easily accessible for all.

Affordable Care Act

Democrats fought and passed the Affordable Care Act of 2010. Building off of seven terms of presidents fighting for health reform and the need for all Americans to have healthcare, Obama and the Democrats were able to transform the new reform act into law.⁹⁹ Despite unanimous disagreement among Republicans, Democrats established and passed the ACA in an attempt to make healthcare coverage universally accessible and equitable to all Americans.

As a result of the ACA, more than 20 million Americans gained coverage, and the uninsured rate was cut by nearly 50%.¹⁰⁰ Many adults were allowed to stay under their parents’ insurance coverage until the age of 26, and discrimination based on pre-existing conditions became illegal.¹⁰¹ This act has also expanded Medicaid and

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ James Dalen, “Why Do So Many Americans Oppose The Affordable Care Act?” *National Library of Medicine*, February 27, 2015, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25731135/>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “Health Care,” *Democrats*, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/te-issues/health-care/>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

SCHIP enrollment by 26%.¹⁰² Democrats are willing to continue fighting Republicans to prevent them from taking away healthcare from millions of beneficiaries.

Medicare and Medicaid

Regarding Medicare and Medicaid, Democrats believe these public programs are imperative to the current healthcare system and should remain public for all people. They believe that both Medicare and Medicaid act as a safety net for Americans, catching individuals who may not be able to afford healthcare if not for these services. Democrats prioritize moving away from the privatization of these programs, viewing it as unfair to force seniors to pay away their savings for benefits they may or may not use.¹⁰³ They believe that the government should play a role in healthcare and fund and expand these fundamental programs to provide more accessibility and access to seniors and low-income individuals.¹⁰⁴

Affordability

Besides the ACA, Democrats continue to work on efforts that make healthcare more accessible for Americans. Direct actions to lower costs are being taken to help more families and uninsured citizens, while laws are being enacted to expand on the ACA. In recent years, the American Rescue Plan was made by the Biden-Harris Administration and House Democrats to make healthcare more affordable than ever before.¹⁰⁵ So far, it has saved an average family of four \$2,400 in insurance premiums.¹⁰⁶ The Inflation Reduction Act has also been enacted to keep 13 million Americans on their current insurance plans and save \$800 each year.¹⁰⁷ Even with these efforts, Democrats continue to make plans to keep Americans insured at an affordable price.

Democrats believe that the number of citizens that receive healthcare benefits should not be restricted to specific individuals. They prioritize providing long-term care to all generations to come, fighting against Republicans' constraining reforms.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ "Democratic Views on Medicare," *Republican Views*, <https://www.republicanviews.org/democratic-views-on-medicare/>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ "Health Care," *Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi*, <https://pelosi.house.gov/issues/health-care>.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the pros and cons of private and public providers?
2. Whose responsibility is it to provide health insurance: the individual, the government, or the employer?
3. Should Medicare, Medicaid, and other programs be privatized?
4. How involved should the government be in health care reform? Does your party value the free-market approach or a government-controlled approach to healthcare?
5. What role should private health insurance play in the future of American Healthcare?
6. As the aging population increases, should Medicaid eligibility remain the same or increase?

Additional Resources

Article | What to Expect in U.S. Healthcare and Beyond:

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare/our-insights/what-to-expect-in-us-healthcare-in-2023-and-beyond>

Article | A Right to Health? The U.S. Legal Case for Making it Happen:

<https://www.chcradio.com/episode/Christina--Ho/680>

Article | I Studied Five Countries' Health Care Systems. We Need to Get More Creative With Ours:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/13/opinion/health-care-reform.html>

Article | How Does the U.S. Healthcare System Compare to Other Countries?

<https://www.pgpf.org/blog/2023/07/how-does-the-us-healthcare-system-compare-to-other-countries>

Article | The gathering storm: The uncertain future of U.S. healthcare

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare/our-insights/the-gathering-storm-the-uncertain-future-of-us-healthcare>

Article | How might healthcare transform in the next 50 years?

<https://www.news-medical.net/news/20230112/How-might-healthcare-transform-in-the-next-50-years.aspx>

Bibliography

- "Advantages and disadvantages of health insurance." *Protective*, <https://www.protective.com/learn/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-health-insurance>.
- "Affordable Care Act (ACA)." *Healthcare.gov*, <https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/affordable-care-act/>.
- "Association of Reported Experiences of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in Health Care with COVID-19 Vaccination Status and Intent." *Center for Disease Controls and Prevention*, April 21, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/wr/mm7216a5.htm>.
- Biniek, Jeannie. "Is the Biden Administration Proposing Cuts to Medicare Advantage?" *KFF*, February 17, 2023. <https://www.kff.org/policy-watch/is-the-biden-administration-proposing-cuts-to-medicare-advantage/>.
- Brady DW, Kessler DP. "Why is health reform so difficult?" *J Health Polit Policy Law*, April, 2010 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3195449/>.
- Butzer, Bryce. "Born From The Great Depression, A Continued Promise to Protect The Sustainability of Health Care Costs." *Bluecross Blueshield*, September 3, 2019. <https://blog.bluecrossmn.com/future-of-health-care/born-from-the-great-depression-a-continued-promise-to-protect-the-sustainability-of-health-care-costs/>.
- Carroll, Aaron E. "The Real Reason the U.S. Has Employer-Sponsored Health Insurance." *The New York Times*, September 5, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/05/upshot/the-real-reason-the-us-has-employer-sponsored-health-insurance.html>.
- "CHIP Eligibility." *Medicaid.gov*. <https://www.medicaid.gov/chip/eligibility/index.html>.
- Dalen JE, Waterbrook K, Alpert JS. "Why do so many Americans oppose the Affordable Care Act?" *National Library of Medicine*, February 27, 2015. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25731135/>.
- "Democratic Views on Medicare." *Republican Views*. <https://www.republicanviews.org/democratic-views-on-medicare/>.
- "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and HITECH Amendments Summary of Privacy Provisions." *Health.Mil*, May 2022. <https://www.health.mil/Reference-Center/Fact-Sheets/2022/05/01/Info-Paper-American-Recovery-and-Reinvestment-Act-ARRA-of-2009>.
- "Facts and Statistics About the Affordable Care Act." *Cover Kansas*, March 9, 2023. <https://getcoveredkansas.org/facts-and-statistics-about-the-affordable-care-act>.
- "FACT SHEET: Republicans Support Protections for Patients with Pre-Existing Conditions." *Ways and Means*, September 29, 2020. <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/fact-sheet-republicans-support-protections-for-patients-with-pre-existing-conditions/>.
- "Fact Sheet: Republicans Support Protections for Patients with Pre-Existing Conditions." *United State House Committee on Ways and Means*, September 29, 2020. <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/fact-sheet-republicans-support-protections-for-patients-with-pre-existing-conditions/>
- "Guide to Patient and Family Engagement." *Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality*, <https://www.ahrq.gov/research/findings/final-reports/ptfamilyscan/ptfamily4.html>.

Hardy, Adam. "Medicare Won't Have Enough Money to Pay Full Benefits After 2031: Report." *Money*, April 5, 2023. <https://money.com/medicare-running-out-of-money-2031/>.

"HEALTH CARE." *Democrats*. <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/health-care/>.

"Health Care." *Nancy Pelosi*. <https://pelosi.house.gov/issues/health-care>.

"Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC)*, June 27, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/phlp/publications/topic/hipaa.html>.

"The History of Medicare." *National Academy of Social Insurance*. <https://www.nasi.org/learn/medicare/the-history-of-medicare/>.

"Home CHIP Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)." *Medicaid.gov*. <https://www.medicaid.gov/chip/index.html>.

Margaret E Kruk. "Mortality Due To Low-Quality Health Systems In The Universal Health Coverage Era: A Systematic Analysis Of Amenable Deaths In 137 Countries." *The Lancet*, September 05, 2018. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31668-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)31668-4/fulltext).

Nelda McCall. "Reforming Medicare Payment: Early Effects of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act on Postacute Care." *National Library of Medicine*, June, 2003. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2690212/>.

"Medicaid." *Medicaid.gov*. <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/index.html>.

"Medicare and Medicaid Act (1965)." *National Archives*. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/medicare-and-medicaid-act>.

Barack Obama. "United States Health Care Reform: Progress to Date and Next Steps." *JAMA*, August 2, 2016. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2533698>.

"Republican and Democratic Platforms on Health Care." *Physicians for a National Health Program*. <https://pnhp.org/news/republican-and-democratic-platforms-on-health-care/>.

"Republicans' Common-Sense Reforms Will Lower Health Care Costs." *Simpson House*. <https://simpson.house.gov/uploadedfiles/summary.pdf>.

Schneider, Andy. "Overview of Medicaid Provisions in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, September 8, 1997. <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/archive/908mcaid.htm>.

Schumpeter, Joseph. "Origins and Evolution of Employment-Based Health Benefits." *National Library of Medicine*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK235989/>.

"Senate and House of Representatives of United States of America." *Internal Revenue Code of 1954*, January 6, 1954. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-68/pdf/STATUTE-68A-Pg1.pdf>.

Leiyu Shu. "Assessing the Impact of the Health Center Growth Initiative on Health Center Patients." *National Library of Medicine*, March, 2010. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2821854/>.

Simas, David. "Why We Passed the Affordable Care Act in the First Place." *The White House President Barack Obama*, October 13, 2013. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2013/10/30/why-we-passed-affordable-care-act-first-place>.

- Singal, Shubham. "Potential Impact of Individual Market Reforms." *Mckinsey & Company*, February 1, 2017. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare/our-insights/potential-impact-of-individual-market-reforms>.
- "Supplemental Security Income Program Description and Legislative History." *Social Security Office of Retirement and Disability Policy*. <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2012/ssi.html>.
- Svahn, John A. "Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981: Legislative History and Summary of OASDI and Medicare Provisions." *Social Security Administration*. <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v44n10/v44n10p3.pdf>.
- "Telehealth, Telemedicine, and Telecare: What's What?" *Federal Communications Commissions*. <https://www.fcc.gov/general/telehealth-telemedicine-and-telecare-whats-what>.
- "Timeline: History of Health Reform in the U.S." *The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation*, June 23, 2023. <https://www.kff.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/5-02-13-history-of-health-reform.pdf>.
- Tolbert, Jennifer. "10 Things to Know About the Unwinding of the Medicaid Continuous Enrollment Provision." *KFF*, June 9, 2023. <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/10-things-to-know-about-the-unwinding-of-the-medicare-continuous-enrollment-provision/>.
- "Understanding the Affordable Care Act: A Comprehensive Guide." *eHealth*, August 13, 2023. <https://www.ehealthinsurance.com/resources/affordable-care-act/understanding-the-aca>.
- "What's Medicare?" *Medicare.gov*. <https://www.medicare.gov/what-medicare-covers/your-medicare-coverage-choices/whats-medicare>.
- "What was Franklin D. Roosevelt's Campaign Slogan?" *Study.com*. <https://homework.study.com/explanation/what-was-franklin-d-roosevelt-s-campaign-slogan.html>.
- "Why Medicaid is Important." *Cancer Action Network*. https://www.fightcancer.org/sites/default/files/docs/final-why_medicaid_is_important_01.09.20.pdf.
- "Why Millions May Be Kicked Off Medicaid In 2023 And What To Do If You Lose Coverage." *PBS*, February 26, 2023. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/why-millions-may-be-kicked-off-medicare-in-2023-and-what-to-do-if-you-lose-coverage>.
- Zhang, Donglan. "Association Between Racial Discrimination And Delayed Or Forgone Care Amid The Covid-19 Pandemic." *National Library of Medicine*, July 7, 2022. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35810933/>.

Public Education

Overview

Across the United States, over 48 million students are currently enrolled in K-12 public schools.¹⁰⁸ These public elementary and high schools are part of a larger public education system that is funded and regulated by the government. For over a century, public schools have been a cornerstone of American society, providing educational opportunities for every child regardless of their background. The success and challenges of the public education system have had a profound impact on the nation's social, economic, and cultural dynamic, and at VMUN 2024, the United States Senate will explore these various issues in hopes of bettering the American society as a whole. As a reminder, the committee will consolidate their discussions to K-12 public education only.

Of the many topics and issues at play within the public education system, especially pertinent topics include quality of education, school safety, funding, book bans, and racial policies in education. Each topic dictates and influences various aspects of student life, often affecting marginalized and low-income students the most. The quality of education decides the utility of a student's education, a school's teaching style (grading system, teachings, etc.) and thus, a student's achievements; school safety controls the physical environment of schools; funding is deeply connected to the socioeconomic class of the school district, and therefore has a major impact on the quality of education; and book bans mandate what should or should not be taught in school. Within each sub-topic, there are considerable problems that may affect the success of both students and schools at large which urgently need to be addressed and improved on.

Another prominent issue in public education is teacher shortages. Teachers serve as the backbone of the public education system, but recently, there has been a shortage of qualified teachers for school systems. There must be potential solutions to attract and retain educators, as teacher shortages are detrimental to education quality. Teacher shortages introduce many problems such as the hindering of student achievement and lower graduation rates. These are all issues that senators should be working to prevent, reduce, and resolve.

Public education plays a central role in preparing the next generation for the future, whether that be pursuing post-secondary education to directly entering the workforce. A well-functioning public education system can lead to increased social mobility, reduced income inequality, and foster a skilled and informed citizenry for decades to come.

¹⁰⁸ Imed Bouchrika, "Number of Public Schools in the US: Key 2023 Data on States & Demographics," *Research.com*, June 28, 2023, <https://research.com/universities-colleges/number-of-public-schools-in-the-us>.

Timeline

1837 — The Common School Movement emerges, marking the start of educational reform. With U.S. Representative Horace Mann at the forefront, the group begins advocating for free and accessible education for all children—regardless of their socioeconomic background or religion.¹⁰⁹ Other supporters included educators, legislators, and citizens who believed in the importance of providing quality education to children.

1842 — New York establishes the first state board of education, emphasizing the state’s commitment to public education oversight and standardization.¹¹⁰ This influences many other states to follow suit.

1852 — Massachusetts enacts the first compulsory education law in the United States, requiring children to attend school for three months per year, six out of the twelve weeks consecutively. It similarly influences other states to follow the trend, but also highlights the limited role the federal government plays in primary and secondary education. For the U.S. as a whole, public education was not put at a high priority until the 1960s, when the federal government became more involved.¹¹¹

July 2, 1862 — The Morrill Act, sponsored by Senator Justin Morrill (R), is signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln (R). It grants states federal lands to establish colleges focused on agriculture and mechanical arts. This act expanded access to higher education and technical training.¹¹²

May 18, 1896 — The Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* establishes the “separate but equal” doctrine, legalizing racial segregation in public facilities and generally providing inferior facilities designated for people of colour, despite the fact that ruling states that these resources should be equal. The results of *Plessy v. Ferguson* also impacted schools, perpetuating educational disparities. Public schools would be designated for white and nonwhite children, with schools for nonwhite children generally being severely underfunded compared to schools for white children.¹¹³

May 17, 1954 — In the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the Supreme Court rules that racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional, marking a significant step towards desegregation. The law would create a movement for greater equality beyond race in school environments for years to come.¹¹⁴

April 11, 1965 — President Lyndon B. Johnson (D) signs the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) into law, providing federal funding to improve educational opportunities for low-income students and narrowing the vast student achievement gap.¹¹⁵

November 29, 1975 — Congress passes the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), ensuring that children with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education tailored to their needs.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Joanne Marshall, “Common Schools Movement,” *Iowa State University*, January 1, 2012, <https://dr.lib.iastate.edu/handle/20.500.12876/22921>.

¹¹⁰ “History of the Board & University of The State of New York,” *New York State Education Department*, <https://www.nysed.gov/about/history-usny.html>.

¹¹¹ “Compulsory Education Laws: Background,” *FindLaw*, June 20, 2016, <https://www.findlaw.com/education/education-options/compulsory-education-laws-background.html>.

¹¹² “Morrill Act (1862),” *National Archives*, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/morrill-act>.

¹¹³ “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA),” *U.S. Department of Education*, <https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rm>.

¹¹⁴ “Wheaton Faculty Experts on the Impact of Brown v. Board of Education,” *Wheaton College*, April 3, 2018, <https://www.wheaton.edu/news/recent-news/2018/april/the-impact-of-brown-v-board-of-education/>.

¹¹⁵ Catherine Paul, “Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965,” *VCU*, <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/programs/education/elementary-and-secondary-education-act-of-1965/>.

¹¹⁶ “IDEA,” *National Center for Learning Disabilities*, <https://www.nclld.org/get-involved/learn-the-law/idea/>.

April 26, 1983 — The National Commission on Excellence in Education releases the “A Nation at Risk” report, highlighting concerns about the quality of American education and calling for reforms.¹¹⁷ These include longer school duration, higher achievement standards, better instructor quality, stronger curricula, and more.

January 8, 2001 — The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is signed into law by President George W. Bush for the purpose of making significant reforms in the American education system. It emphasizes accountability measures through standardized testing and aims to improve student achievement gaps compared to international competitors. The law faced challenges from the program's lack of funds which limited the implementation of the president's ambitious goals.¹¹⁸

May 11, 2010 — Arizona Governor Jan Brewer passes Arizona House Bill 2281 (HB 2281) into law, restricting the topic of ethnic studies inside public schools. Specifically targeting the Mexican-American Studies program in Tucson, it marks the continuation of censorship and restriction of academic freedom in the current society. It causes activists and critics to gather against the idea of censorship, eventually overturning the law in 2017.¹¹⁹

June 2, 2010 — The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) introduces the Common Core State Standards, which aims to establish consistent learning objectives for K–12 education across the nation.¹²⁰

March 2, 2016 — South Dakota Governor Dennis Daugaard signs South Dakota's Senate Bill 160 (SB 160) into law, hoping to restrict the discussion of gender identity as a school subject among students. Although later vetoed, this bill highlighted the existing reattempts at restrictions inside public education systems.¹²¹

March 11, 2020 — The COVID-19 pandemic sends education into complete disarray, prompting widespread school closures and a shift to remote learning, exacerbating existing educational inequities.¹²²

March 11, 2021 — Congress under the direction of Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D) passes the American Rescue Plan Act, providing a total of \$290 billion to support the safe reopening of schools. The act helped many students begin learning again and enhanced educational resources by supporting the integration of the internet and digital resources into the common curriculum.¹²³

May 31, 2023 — Censorship becomes an even more prevalent topic than it previously was in public education, with some arguing that curriculum should steer completely clear of teachings related to sexuality, gender, and

¹¹⁷ Anya Kamenetz, “What ‘A Nation at Risk’ Got Wrong, And Right, About U.S. Schools,” *NPR*, April 29, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/04/29/604986823/what-a-nation-at-risk-got-wrong-and-right-about-u-s-schools>.

¹¹⁸ Alyson Klein, “No Child Left Behind: An Overview,” *EducationWeek*, April 10, 2015, <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/no-child-left-behind-an-overview/2015/04>.

¹¹⁹ “What Happened in Arizona?” *OSWEGO State University of New York*, <https://libraryguides.oswego.edu/c.php?g=542860&p=5120200>.

¹²⁰ Catherine Gewertz, “The Common Core Explained,” *EducationWeek*, September 30, 2015, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-common-core-explained/2015/09>.

¹²¹ “South Dakota House OKs Ban On Teaching About Gender Dysphoria,” *NBC News*, February 13, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/south-dakota-house-oks-ban-teaching-about-gender-dysphoria-n971061>.

¹²² Alexandra Golden, “What Was a Gap is Now a Chasm: Remote Schooling, The Digital Divide, and Educational Inequities Resulting From The Covid-19 Pandemic,” *National Library of Medicine*, June 12, 2023, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10259090/>.

¹²³ “American Rescue Plan,” *The White House*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/american-rescue-plan/>.

race.¹²⁴ Notably, the State of Florida pushes back against topics inside the College Board’s Advanced Placement African American Studies and Advanced Placement Psychology courses.¹²⁵

2023 — The Biden-Harris Administration launches the Education Equity Initiative, focusing on addressing disparities in resources and opportunities among different income levels to ensure an equitable education system.¹²⁶

Historical Analysis

The development of public education in the United States has been shaped by a web of historical events, social dynamics, and actions of key individuals. The results of these events have influenced several current topics such as enrollment, students’ success past secondary education, school resources, access to education, censorship, and teacher shortages.

The Introduction of the Common School

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, schools were primarily supported by local communities and religious groups. These schools laid the foundation for public education in the United States. However, these schools were not consistently accessible to students across the country and the curriculum was heavily based on religious practices. Horace Mann, known as the Father of American education for his work in promoting public education, was a key leadership figure during the Common School Movement in the 1840s and prompted the idea of free, publicly funded schools accessible to all children.¹²⁷ However, the movement lacked resources and faced resistance from communities, leading to disparities between communities in educational quality.

Segregation in American Schools

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, racial segregation was deeply ingrained in the education systems, particularly in the Southern states. The landmark Supreme Court decision in 1954, *Brown v. The Board of Education* was a pivotal moment in the fight against segregation. The ruling in this case deemed segregation in schools unconstitutional and contradictory to the “separate but equal” doctrine that previously justified segregation. Despite the historic ruling, desegregation efforts faced considerable opposition when being put into practice. A crucial example of this opposition was the 1957 incident involving the Little Rock Nine. Nine black students were prevented from attending Central High School in Little Rock when Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus sent the National Guard to prevent them from entering. President Eisenhower condemned the actions of Faubus and deployed troops to ensure the safety of the Little Rock Nine as they entered Central High School.

¹²⁴ The Associated Press, “AP Psychology Class May Be Available to Florida Students After All,” *NPR*, August 5, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/05/1192355292/ap-psychology-florida-college-board>.

¹²⁵ Matt Lavietes, “Florida Effectively Bans Ap Psychology Course Over Lgbtq Content, College Board Says,” *NBC News*, August 3, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/florida-effectively-bans-ap-psychology-course-lgbtq-content-college-bo-rcna98036>.

¹²⁶ “Department of Education Equity Action Plan,” *U.S. Department of Education*, <https://www.ed.gov/equity>.

¹²⁷ Joanne Marshall, “Common Schools Movement,” *Iowa State University*, January 1, 2012, <https://dr.lib.iastate.edu/handle/20.500.12876/22921>.

The nine students were able to receive the education that the federal government promised, but only after much challenge and triumph.

Federal Legislation on Education

The 1960s and 1970s marked a period of increased federal involvement in education. This era was defined by legislation that worked towards improving the American educational system such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965—a pivotal legislative move that sought to address educational disparities among low-income students and provided funding for schools in need.¹²⁸ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1975 was another significant milestone, ensuring students with disabilities would receive the necessary educational services and accommodations.¹²⁹ In the 1980s and 1990s, the educational landscape began to place greater emphasis on accountability and standardized testing. The release of “A Nation at Risk,” a report put out in 1983 by the Reagan administration, highlighted concerns about the quality of American education and the need for more rigour within schools. This led to reforms that prioritized measuring academic performance and held schools accountable for their outcomes.¹³⁰ The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 further intensified this accountability-driven approach, but also faced criticism for placing excessive pressure and promoting a “teach to the test” mentality.¹³¹

Furthermore, as the allocation of school funding is based on local property tax, throughout history, disparities in educational resources and accessibility have been perpetuated and cemented into the public education system. Efforts to resolve the educational inequalities between affluent and low-income communities have been ongoing; for instance, the Common Core State Standards Initiative was introduced in 2010, which aims to set consistent learning objectives nationwide.¹³²

Post-Secondary Education in America

Higher education in America began as colonial colleges, which typically enrolled less than a hundred students and produced few degrees. Throughout the mid-19th century, new schools were built especially for advanced study. This led to the emergence of engineering, law, and medical institutions. Following the Morrill Act in 1862, states also began building universities for the sake of profit, as they knew they could make money from selling the land to build these institutions. This was one of the first instances of the federal government involving itself in the development of post-secondary education programs.

Later in the early 20th century, the number of universities and students enrolled rose drastically. In 1900, the Association of American Universities was created, with its members including various well-known and prestigious American schools such as Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, the University of Pennsylvania. American universities had an increased emphasis on both graduate and undergraduate programs, challenging

¹²⁸ “Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA),” *U.S. Department of Education*, <https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn>.

¹²⁹ “IDEA,” *National Center for Learning Disabilities*, <https://www.nclld.org/get-involved/learn-the-law/idea/>.

¹³⁰ Anya Kamenetz, “What ‘A Nation at Risk’ Got Wrong, And Right, About U.S. Schools,” *NPR*, April 29, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2018/04/29/604986823/what-a-nation-at-risk-got-wrong-and-right-about-u-s-schools>.

¹³¹ Alyson Klein, “No Child Left Behind: An Overview,” *EducationWeek*, April 10, 2015, <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/no-child-left-behind-an-overview/2015/04>.

¹³² Catherine Gewertz, “The Common Core Explained,” *EducationWeek*, September 30, 2015, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-common-core-explained/2015/09>.

the tradition of collegiate studies from decades prior. In the latter half of the 20th century, universities continued to expand in the scope of their programs and took initiative to provide opportunities to marginalized communities through affirmative action, student organizations, and other various efforts.

Evidently, the history of public education in the United States includes a series of developments and challenges. Ever since the Common School Movement in the 19th century, various factors have shaped the evolution of public schooling. Racial segregation, federal legislation, accountability measures, and ongoing struggles for equity and access have all played significant roles in the present state of public education.

Past Involvement

While public education has progressed significantly throughout the past century, it has also experienced a multitude of setbacks. In recent years, parents, students, and teachers have become unsatisfied with the system, making the system's flaws more visible than ever. As a result, the government has made efforts to tackle the flaws in the classroom with varying levels of success.¹³³

Brown v. Board of Education

The first major reform movement on public education in the U.S. originated from the *Brown v. Board of Education* court case. Prior to this movement, black and white Americans were segregated in schools as a result of Jim Crow laws—laws that encouraged racial discrimination and the separation of the two races.¹³⁴ These laws were seen as morally acceptable in schools because on paper alone, the two separated schools were described as “separate but equal,” meaning that while children were educated in different rooms or schools, the quality of education was equal. These laws remained in place for six decades until African American Oliver Brown filed a lawsuit against the Board of Education of Topeka.¹³⁵

In 1951, Brown sued the Kansas school system after his daughter was denied admission into an all-white school. Brown argued that this violated the 14th Amendment, which claims that states may not “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”¹³⁶ Brown argued that since the black and white schools were not equal in quality, Kansas schools were not following the rule of “separate but equal.”

When the case arrived in the U.S. Kansas District court, the jury agreed that segregation had a detrimental effect on the state's coloured community, but still believed the schooling followed the “separate but equal” doctrine.¹³⁷ Following this ruling, Brown did not relent, and in 1952, the case was brought to the U.S. Supreme Court. After much debate, Chief Justice Earl Warren created an agreement that segregated schools would be unconstitutional the following year.

¹³³ Richard Capone and Kurt Hulett, “K-12 Education Reform: A New Paradigm,” *LetsGoLearn*, www.letsgolearn.com/resources/education-reform/.

¹³⁴ “Brown v. Board of Education.” *History.com*, October 27, 2009, www.history.com/topics/black-history/brown-v-board-of-education-of-topeka.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

Higher Education Act (HEA)

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson established the Higher Education Act (HEA) in accordance with his Great Society domestic plan.¹³⁸ Prior to this legislation, many students were unable to access post-secondary education due to their socioeconomic status. The implementation of the HEA fought against this by increasing funds given to secondary education institutions, providing students more opportunities for scholarships, and offering students more non-predatory loans that can more easily be taken on.

Since then, the services that the act provided have been used by millions of American students. It has helped college students lessen their financial burdens, creating the frameworks for the Pell Grants and Stafford loans which have covered up to 50% of many students' college tuition. Overall, the law has helped many students gain access to education they would not have received otherwise.¹³⁹ Unfortunately, it expired in 2013 and has since been temporarily renewed multiple times up to 2020. At that point, the pandemic forced the Senate to put discussion on continuing its services on hold.¹⁴⁰

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act (Title IX)

In the midst of the Women's Rights Movement, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act (Title IX) was passed in 1972.¹⁴¹ This act prohibited women from being excluded from schools, education programs, and financial aid systems. It was emphasized that grants are given to these entities to ensure their services are equitable to all, no matter their sex.

Besides this, Title IX prevents discrimination of any kind based on sex. This includes sexual harassment, failure to provide equal opportunity, discrimination based on pregnancy, and more.¹⁴² The act is still enforced today to ensure a safe learning environment for both women and men.

Scopes Monkey Trial

A prominent past court case that covered the topic of censorship in public education is the Scopes Monkey Trial. In 1925, journalist H. L. Mencken sued high school teacher John T. Scopes for teaching mankind's evolution from the monkey, rather than following the Tennessee State's Butler Act which instructed the teaching of mankind's origin strictly from the Book of Genesis from the Bible. As Tennessee was a largely Republican state, the Butler Act was previously passed in order to appeal to the opinions of most Kansas people. This made Mr. Scopes' violation of the act a particularly contentious issue. Ultimately, Scopes was found guilty by the Kansas court and fined \$100; however, after he appealed the case, Scopes was able to win by pointing out the issues of the Butler Law. The Supreme Court of Tennessee was convinced of Scopes' reasoning, and ruled the Butler Act unconstitutional. This could be considered America's first action against censorship in education, and marked

¹³⁸ Julia Kagan, "The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA): Definition and Provisions," *Investopedia*, June 13, 2023, www.investopedia.com/terms/h/higher-education-act-of-1965-hea.asp.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ "Sex Discrimination: Overview of the Law," *U.S. Department of Education*, April 4, 2023, www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/guid/ocr/sexoverview.html.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

an event in American history of the first time people began talking about what should and should not be taught in schools.¹⁴³

The American Teacher Act

In recent years, the issue of payment for teachers has become increasingly prominent amongst American schools. Even though these individuals create the foundation for every future generation's success, the country fails to compensate them compared to many other occupations. As a result, Congress passed the America Teacher Act in February 2023. With this bill, the government promised to make education a national priority, address teacher shortages, and make teaching a more valuable profession. Specifically, the government promised to create a minimum wage of \$60,000 for all teachers. Since then, states have been working to make reforms on teacher payment and wellbeing, but have been slow to implement the reforms.¹⁴⁴

Current Situation

Although access to education has improved significantly throughout the past century, the current education system continues to be flawed.¹⁴⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated issues surrounding already educational resources and highlighted the deep-seated issues within the system, such as censorship in the classroom and systemic racism affecting schools.¹⁴⁶ From a lack of technology and other educational resources in impoverished urban and rural communities to archaic teaching and disciplinary methods, the United States must rethink how they want their students and children to be educated in the new world.¹⁴⁷

Financial Challenges in the Education System

Although the right to education has expanded to include women and other minorities, inequality in the quality of education persists. Currently, more than 90 percent of funding for elementary and secondary public education depends on municipalities and states, which both have much less capital than the federal government.¹⁴⁸ As a result, there are large disparities between communities, leading students to have very different qualities of curricula and access to resources. For instance, students from California may be placed in more advanced education and receive more opportunities as the state's economy and budget for education is larger, but students in states with smaller education budgets such as Alabama do not have the same variety of course options and opportunities in their public schools. These funding disparities are especially apparent when comparing per pupil spending in different states, with New York spending nearly \$26,571 per pupil in 2020 compared to Idaho only

¹⁴³ James Foster, "Scopes Monkey Trial," *Free Speech Center*, September 19, 2023, <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/scopes-monkey-trial/>.

¹⁴⁴ Libby Stanford, "Teachers Would Make at Least \$60K Under New Federal Bill," *EducationWeek*, December 15, 2022, <https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/teachers-would-make-at-least-60k-under-new-federal-bill/2022/12>.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ "Equity and Quality in Education," *OECD Publishing*, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264130852-en>.

¹⁴⁷ "How Bad Are the Public Schools? - Is There a Crisis? | the Battle over School Choice | Frontline," *PBS*, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/vouchers/howbad/crisis.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Sylvia Allegretto, Emma Garcia, Elaine Weiss, "Public Education Funding in the U.S. Needs an Overhaul: How a Larger Federal Role Would Boost Equity and Shield Children from Disinvestment During Downturns," *Economic Policy Institute*, 2022, <https://www.epi.org/publication/public-education-funding-in-the-us-needs-an-overhaul/>.

spending \$7,985 per student.^{149, 150} This underinvestment in education by the federal government undermines the value of a good education and puts thousands of students at a disadvantage.¹⁵¹ The government only spends USD 17.6 billion on the education sector, which makes up only 0.38% of taxpayers' money.¹⁵²

Furthermore, as the pandemic led to a global economic crisis that resulted in millions being laid off from their jobs and unable to afford basic essentials, more pressure was placed on the government to act as more schools were shutting down and remaining schools became overcrowded.¹⁵³ Currently, about 17,400 schools out of the 40,500 schools in the U.S. are overcrowded.¹⁵⁴ Financial issues have also been exacerbated by teachers and teacher unions asking for pay increases and students asking for more resources from the already tight public school budget. Consequently, many schools are unable to hire quality teachers because of underfunding, which pushes for increased federal assistance nationwide as teachers and parents reckon with the repercussions of COVID-19 and try to help their children gain a quality education so they can financially support themselves.¹⁵⁵

Teacher Shortage

Many college graduates choose to pursue jobs in business and science instead of teaching because of the overwhelming amount of pressure and work it takes and its disproportionate income.¹⁵⁶ A study conducted by the Economic Policy Institute in 2021 found that college graduates who pursue teaching jobs receive 32.9 percent less than their graduate counterparts.¹⁵⁷ As a result, at least 36,000 teaching positions are left vacant and even more, with at least 163,000 positions being filled with underqualified and overwhelmed teachers.¹⁵⁸ For instance, many teachers do not have degrees in education or are forced to teach subjects which they do not specialize in due to staff shortages. Additionally, teachers frequently have to deal with very high teacher-to-student ratios, thus leading to less individual attention for students and overall lower quality in teaching. Staff shortages significantly lower teachers' job satisfaction, with over 35 percent of teachers now saying they are likely to quit within the next two years.¹⁵⁹ If left unresolved, by 2025, the U.S. could be short 200,000 teachers.¹⁶⁰ American education faces a bleak future if they continue to ignore the voices of teachers nationwide.

¹⁴⁹ E.J. McMahon, "Ny School Spending Again Led Us, Hitting All-Time High in 2020-21," *Empire Center*, May 18, 2023, <https://www.empirecenter.org/publications/ny-school-spending-again-led-us-hitting-all-time-in-2020-21/>.

¹⁵⁰ "Per Pupil Spending by State," *Wisevoter*, <https://wisevoter.com/state-rankings/per-pupil-spending-by-state/>.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Liv Finne, "Public Education Spending – Where Does The Money Go?" *Washington Policy Center*, January 6, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpolicy.org/publications/detail/public-education-spending-where-does-the-money-go>.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ "Condition of America's Public School Facilities: 1999," *National Center for Education Statistics*, <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/frss/publications/2000032/index.asp?sectionid=8>.

¹⁵⁵ "School Funding Issues: How Decreasing Budgets Are Impacting Student Learning & Achievement: American University," *School of Education Online*, December 21, 2022, <https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/school-funding-issues/>.

¹⁵⁶ Christina Maxouris, "Teachers are leaving and few people want to join the field. Experts are sounding the alarm," *CNN*, February 5, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/05/us/teacher-prep-student-shortages-covid-crisis/index.html>.

¹⁵⁷ Sylvia Allegretto, "The Teacher Pay Penalty Has Hit a New High: Trends in Teacher Wages and Compensation through 2021," *Economic Policy Institute*, August 16, 2022, <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-penalty-2022/>.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Edsall, "There's a Reason There Aren't Enough Teachers in America. Many Reasons, Actually," *The New York Times*, December 14, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/14/opinion/teacher-shortage-education.html>.

¹⁵⁹ "2023 Teacher Shortage Statistics Prove We Need to Fix This Profession," *We Are Teachers*, June 29, 2023, <https://www.weareteachers.com/teacher-shortage-statistics/>.

¹⁶⁰ Emma García, Elaine Weiss, "The Teacher Shortage Is Real, Large and Growing, and Worse Than We Thought: The First Report in 'The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market' Series," *Economic Policy Institute*, March, 2019, <https://www.epi.org/publication/the-teacher-shortage-is-real-large-and-growing-and-worse-than-we-thought-the-first-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/>.

Curriculum Restrictions

News surrounding Florida's recent revisions to Black history and American history in its curriculum has caused concern and backlash from thousands of American educators and citizens.¹⁶¹ While many focus on specific areas like Florida and Texas, problems and conversations surrounding the portrayal of Black history in curricula have been present in every state for years.¹⁶² There are two main perspectives on Black history and how it should be taught. One side advocates for teaching Black American slavery as an event that made enslaved people more resilient and adaptable to adversity, while the other side believes depictions of slavery should not be taught at all to prevent students from feeling ashamed and unpatriotic.¹⁶³ The topic is being highly debated, but often, more liberal states take the first approach, and more conservative states take the second.

This restriction of Black American history is not limited to just curriculums, but also involves various book bans. Recently, states have been banning more books that explore themes of race, gender, and sexuality further erasing history and information. For instance, in Texas, at least 438 books were banned from public schools because of "sexually explicit and vulgar material."¹⁶⁴ This limits the learning of many students in school and also promotes the idea that the government should have control of young peoples' freedom of exploration. Many believe that these mass censorship politicize schools and perpetuate harmful stereotypes and discrimination in the classroom.¹⁶⁵

School Security and Safe Learning Environments

Aside from teacher shortages and lack of educational resources, school safety continues to be a prominent issue. In 2022, there were 46 school shootings in the United States, contributing to the hundreds of thousands of students who have experienced school shootings since 1999.¹⁶⁶ These school shootings are often caused by easy access to firearms, unsafe childhood environments, and bullying and alienation. Some schools within lower income levels are more vulnerable to these attacks, and the stated issues are more present in the students and their surrounding households. This exposes nearly 3 million students in the United States to shootings per year, consequently causing more cases of mental illnesses in school-aged children and increasing criminal activity when other students copy the acts of these shooters.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ Sarah Mervosh, "Florida's New Black History Standards Have Drawn Backlash. Who Wrote Them?" *The New York Times*, July 28, 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/28/us/african-american-history-standards-florida-task-force.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&state=default&module=styln-us-schools&variant=show®ion=MAIN_CONTENT_1&block=storyline_top_links_recirc.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Hogan Gore, "Texas Gov. Greg Abbott Signs Ban on 'sexually Explicit' Books in School Libraries into Law," *Statesman*, June 13, 2023, <https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2023/06/12/hb-900-texas-book-ban-gov-greg-abbott-sign-banning-sexually-explicit-content-public-school-libraries/70314516007/>.

¹⁶⁵ Julia Cusick, Madeline Shepherd, Emma Lofgren, Jean Ross, Rose Khattar, "Book Banning, Curriculum Restrictions, and the Politicization of U.S. Schools," *Center for American Progress*, February 22, 2023, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/book-banning-curriculum-restrictions-and-the-politicization-of-u-s-schools/>.

¹⁶⁶ Steven Rich, John Woodrow Cox, Linda Chong, Monica Ulmanu, John Muyskens, Lucas Trevor, "There Have Been 386 School Shootings since Columbine," *The Washington Post*, April 3, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/interactive/school-shootings-database/>.

¹⁶⁷ "The Long, Shameful List of Gunfire on School Grounds in America." *Everytown Research & Policy*, February 28, 2023, <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/gunfire-on-school-grounds/>.

In light of this, schools have been boosting their security and increasingly spending money on other measures to protect their students and teachers.¹⁶⁸ These resources include both direct and indirect measures, such as increased safety infrastructure and greater mental health and anti-bullying services. In addition, nearly 43 percent of public schools now have a “panic button,” which silently contacts the police in case of an emergency, and 78 percent of classrooms now have locks on their doors.¹⁶⁹ In an effort to create a safe learning environment, schools must spend much of their limited budgets on security to help students' education be helpful and worthwhile. Unfortunately, this leaves some schools at a greater disadvantage than others because some communities are more susceptible to school shootings than others.¹⁷⁰ Concerns surrounding school shootings are only getting more severe as schools return to pre-COVID states, and many parents are questioning what the future of their child's education will look like.¹⁷¹

Quality Based on Income Levels

In the U.S., the relationship between income levels and quality education has become increasingly apparent. Although graduation rates have been on the rise for both affluent and low-income students, the latter has been growing at a much slower pace. For instance, from 1970 to 1990, graduation rates of students from high-income families grew from 36 to 54 percent, while those of students from low-income families only grew from 5 to 9 percent.¹⁷² This stems from many deep societal issues such as the emphasis on education inside different cultures, limited educational support, resource disparities, and more. Higher-income neighborhoods usually receive better quality education because they have greater access to and emphasis on education.

Lasting Effects of the Pandemic

To take a more holistic view of education, students in the American public school system are doing worse than individuals in the past. The greatest reason for this setback is the pandemic. With COVID-19, many students did not have access to quality education, creating a gap between the previous generations. This can be seen in both reading and math test scores of 13-year-olds. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, math test scores have dropped by nine points, and reading test scores have dropped by four points in these individuals when compared to tests from 2019–2020.¹⁷³ The scores are the lowest in decades, and this decline is especially prominent among low-performing students. These individuals have seen test drops of an average of 12 to 14 percent, showing the need for higher education and greater resources.¹⁷⁴ Schools have begun reconsidering grading systems and discussing whether this could be the core issue of declining performance

¹⁶⁸ Sarah Mervosh, “Panic Buttons, Classroom Locks: How Schools Have Boosted Security,” *The New York Times*, January 12, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/12/us/school-shootings-security.html>.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Laura Santhanam, “Concern about Gun Violence in American Schools Is on the Rise, New Poll Shows.” *PBS*, May 24, 2023, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/a-year-after-ualde-support-rises-for-controlling-gun-violence>.

¹⁷² “A Simple Equation: More Education = More Income,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/business/economy/a-simple-equation-more-education-more-income.html>.

¹⁷³ Sequoia Carrillo, “U.S. Reading And Math Scores Drop To Lowest Level In Decades,” *NPR*, June 21, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/21/1183445544/u-s-reading-and-math-scores-drop-to-lowest-level-in-decades>.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

rates. Educators have found that using more qualitative feedback and assessment systems has motivated students to learn more, rather than a quantitative number, which can lower students' self-esteem.

Possible Solutions and Controversies

Moving Away from the Letter Grade System

The idea of eradicating letter grades has been gaining traction among teachers, parents, and students alike.¹⁷⁵ Many believe that a few letters can not represent a student's learning capability and that schools should replace this old-fashioned system with new systems of grading.¹⁷⁶ Rather than being confined to requirements and competition with their peers, students would be able to find their interests and be on a more equal playing field with others.¹⁷⁷ The stress and anxiety caused by the old grading system would no longer exist, and teachers would be able to focus more on helping the student learn rather than showing what the student did wrong.¹⁷⁸ Critics argue that these reforms would hinder students' ability to become independent and take responsibility for their actions.¹⁷⁹ Removing the grades may also mean removing accountability, which is a skill that is hard to acquire beyond the high school environment. Some of these individuals believe that rather than eliminating the letter grade system entirely, schools can just remove the "fail" factor, creating a "no-zero" policy.¹⁸⁰ This has been implemented in some American schools already and is believed to be a more tame way of transitioning to a modern era of learning. Still, this proposal is criticized by some educators, who argue that it benefits students who do not turn in any work at all.¹⁸¹ As a result, there are disagreements on what systems should be implemented in American school systems, and any subtle change to the grading systems can make a large difference for students today.

Improving Accessibility to High-Quality Education

After the pandemic, students tended to generate lower scores on standardized tests than children prior to the pandemic.¹⁸² In both reading and math sections, students are comparatively less competent compared to matched students just a few years prior.¹⁸³ This is because of the gaps that were created in their education, with low-income school district students hit particularly hard.¹⁸⁴ There are various ways senators can resolve this issue, such as increasing the number of high-quality institutions they can attend. To do this, funds would have

¹⁷⁵ Susie An, "Public Schools Try Ditching A-to-F Letter Grades," February 28, 2020, www.npr.org/local/309/2020/02/28/810325384/public-schools-try-ditching-a-to-f-letter-grades.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Amelia Harper, "Can ditching letter grades improve student learning and engagement?" *K-12 Dive*, February 15, 2019, www.k12dive.com/news/can-ditching-letter-grades-improve-student-learning-and-engagement/548292/.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Emma Dorn, "Covid-19 And Education: The Lingering Effects Of Unfinished Learning." *McKinsey & Company*, July 27, 2021, www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Hanna Skandera, "America's Education System Is Failing—But A Growing School Choice Movement Believes It Has The Solution," *Fortune*, June 23, 2023, fortune.com/2023/06/23/americas-education-system-is-failing-but-a-growing-school-choice-movement-believes-it-has-the-solution/.

to be given to parents to allow them to send their children to a greater range of schools besides just their local public schools including charters, religious schools, and secular private schools.¹⁸⁵ An increase in funding would be needed to make this possible, but this could benefit many low-income families by helping their children get the education they require to achieve social mobility. This has already been started by the Daniels Fund and 50CAN, both organizations that provide parents greater options, but it still needs time and funding to be properly established.¹⁸⁶ Further, this could reduce pressure on public schools which are already overcrowded and underfunded. Funding is a major solution when it comes to making education more accessible, and delegates are encouraged to brainstorm ideas regarding that when it comes to resolving the greater issue.

Changing the Education Work Culture

Teacher shortages affect both the students and operations of every school. Many educators are leaving their positions, losing interest, and looking into other industries.¹⁸⁷ Reasons for this include insufficient low pay, unhealthy work environments, minimal teachers' rights, and more.¹⁸⁸ A possible solution to this issue is to change the work culture that teachers exist in, promoting more loyalty to a school and to the field. Senators may propose to increase teachers' benefits and well-being through implementing new support programs, from partnerships with community efforts to add-ons to current efforts on bettering teacher-prep programs.¹⁸⁹ By improving the education-sector work culture, teachers are encouraged to stay employed and continue to help young students succeed in their future careers. Many educators are dissatisfied with their jobs for many reasons, and this is just one aspect that delegates can choose to explore. Delegates are encouraged to build off of this solution to help decrease teacher turnover.

Banning Certain Topics in School

With unrestricted access to books and other media at school, children may unintentionally come across inappropriate topics for their age without proper adult supervision and age-appropriate explanations.¹⁹⁰ Book bans on specific topics seek to prevent young students from being able to access potentially inappropriate and vulgar material, such as sex, drugs, and violence. However, some believe that these bans restrict freedom of speech and individual liberties. Currently, given the controversy of these bans, schools need to clarify the criteria for books to be considered as "potentially dangerous." Proponents of book bans often believe that such bans will protect children from danger, while others claim that these bans could protect children from dangerous content. Moreover, some believe that book bans offer parents the freedom to decide what their children should learn,

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas B. Edsall, "There's a Reason There Aren't Enough Teachers in America. Many Reasons, Actually," *The New York Times*, December 14, 2022, www.nytimes.com/2022/12/14/opinion/teacher-shortage-education.html.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Lauraine Langreo, "5 Strategies to Tackle Teacher Shortages," *EducationWeek*, February 10, 2023, www.edweek.org/leadership/5-strategies-to-tackle-teacher-shortages/2023/02.

¹⁹⁰ Susan L. Webb, "Book Banning," *Free Speech Center*, September 19, 2023, <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/book-banning/>.

whereas others believe that these controlling measures constitute censorship—an overreach of governmental power—and can be detrimental to students’ educational and personal growth.¹⁹¹

Increasing School Safety

There are many ways that security can be increased inside schools. One solution that specifically addresses gun violence is placing greater emphasis on gun laws and gun control. For instance, Senators could place a higher emphasis on Secure Storage and Child-Access Prevention (CAP) Laws and raise the minimum age for purchasing firearms. CAP Laws require gun owners to protect their firearms from children and be held accountable if the gun is not properly secured. This should help prevent the 75 percent of individuals who borrow guns from their relatives from conducting shootings, but there currently is not great importance on it, so it is not being enforced.¹⁹² With greater emphasis, parents and adults are more likely to enforce it, and fewer children will have access to guns. Raising the firearm purchase age will ensure individuals grow more mature before having access to these dangerous items. Currently, the purchase age is 18 years old, but if the age is raised to 21 years old, there may be significantly fewer school shootings since 18 to 20-year-olds are three times more likely to conduct shootings than older individuals.¹⁹³ These are just two instances of how violence in public education systems can be solved.

Bloc Positions

Republican Party

At the core of the Republican policies and stances on education is the right for families to choose what their children learn, commonly known as parental rights. Most Republicans have taken on a more traditional and conservative view on the issue, preferring education that balances moral values and a well-rounded curriculum.¹⁹⁴ For example, six in ten Republicans believe teachers should lead students in religious prayers, and only ten percent of Republicans believe schools should teach students about gender diversity and transitioning.¹⁹⁵ Although these statistics are two completely different parts of a child’s education, they both support what has been traditionally taught in the last few decades of America.¹⁹⁶ This traditional perspective on education has led many Republicans to adopt the “school choice” argument, allowing students to attend schools outside of their district, whether charter, private, home school or a different public school.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ “Banned Books - Top 3 Pros and Cons,” *Britannica ProCon.org*, September 28, 2023, <https://www.procon.org/headlines/banned-books-top-3-pros-and-cons/>

¹⁹² “How Can We Prevent Gun Violence in American Schools?” *Everytown*, June 6, 2023, <https://everytownresearch.org/report/how-can-we-prevent-gun-violence-in-schools/>.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ “Republican Views on Education and Jobs,” *Republican Jobs*, .

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ “History and Evolution of Public Education in the US,” *Graduate School of Education & Human Development, George Washington University*, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606970.pdf>.

¹⁹⁷ “School Choice,” *Merriam Webster*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/school%20choice>.

As a result, Republicans also believe that the federal government should not have too much involvement in children's education and question if the current system is even contributing positively to society.¹⁹⁸ Most conservatives believe curriculums should be managed on a local and community basis, with 52% of Republican parents believing the federal government plays too big of a role.¹⁹⁹ ²⁰⁰ Therefore, many Republicans are in favour of reducing federal spending on education because they believe "if money were the solution, our schools would be problem-free. More money alone does not necessarily equal better performance."²⁰¹ Instead, Republicans support the current school funding system, with it being supported by local community and state funds.

In a similar manner, many Republicans prefer implementing school safety systems instead of national gun restrictions like their Democratic counterparts. After the Robb Elementary School shooting, many Republicans are discussing a federal grant for schools to use to increase their security measures, also known as school "hardening."²⁰² Some of these measures include adding metal detectors, access control devices, and armed security.²⁰³

Although they disagree in some areas, the two parties still share a few similarities. They both recognize affordability with quality education, schooling that prepares individuals for future careers, and education that provides opportunity to involve parents.²⁰⁴

Democratic Party

The Democratic Party puts emphasis on accessibility and affordability.²⁰⁵ Since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was enacted by Lyndon B. Johnson and a Democratic Congress in 1965, Democrats have focused on providing education to every American child.²⁰⁶

Regardless of a student's background—their gender, income, and race—all children should get a quality education without enrollment and achievement barriers. Democrats believe that all students should receive comprehensive STEAM education (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics), which provides children a diverse education and prepares them for successful futures in the current economy.²⁰⁷ This includes critical and creative thinking, leadership, judgment, and decision-making.²⁰⁸

¹⁹⁸ "Republican Views on Education and Jobs," *Republican Jobs*, www.republicanjobs.gov/resources-republican-jobs/republican-views-on-education-and-jobs/.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ "Republican And Democratic Parents Have Different Views of The Influence Government, School Boards, Parents and Teachers Have on What Schools Teach," *Pew Research Center*, June 5, 2023, www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/05/partisan-divides-over-k-12-education-in-8-charts/sr_23-05-31_k12partisandivides_5/.

²⁰¹ "What the Democrats and Republicans Stand For on education: Excerpts From Party Platforms," *Acsd*, October 2 2023, <https://www.ascd.org/blogs/what-the-democrats-and-republicans-stand-for-on-education-excerpts-from-party-platforms>

²⁰² "Gop Talk Of School 'hardening' Panned As Fig Leaf By Democrats" Roll Call, *May 25, 2022*, <https://rollcall.com/2022/05/25/gop-talk-of-school-hardening-panned-as-fig-leaf-by-democrats/>.

²⁰³ "How To Make Schools Safer Without Additional Physical Security Measures" October 26, 2022, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/how-to-make-schools-safer-without-additional-physical-security-measure/>.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ "Education," *Democratic National Committee*, <https://www.democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/education/>.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ "The STEM vs. STEAM Debate," *National Inventors Hall of Fame*, www.invent.org/blog/trends-stem/stem-steam-defined.

²⁰⁸ David Griffith, "What the Democrats and Republicans Stand For on Education: Excerpts From Party Platforms," *ACSD*, October 2, 2020, www.ascd.org/blogs/what-the-Democrats-and-Republicans-stand-for-on-education-excerpts-from-party-platforms.

Because of their commitment to accessibility, Democrats believe that providing a safe learning environment is vital to providing students with a good education. While their Republican counterparts hold the same perspective, their solutions to school security differ. Many Democrats are in favour of restrictive gun laws instead of increasing school security measures. These restrictions include comprehensive background checks for firearm carriers and banning guns from schools as a whole.²⁰⁹

Outside of on-campus changes, many Democrats also favour maintaining federal spending on education. 35% percent of Democrats believe that the federal government's involvement in education is 'just right' compared to 17% of their Republican counterparts.²¹⁰

Compared to conservatives, Democrats believe students should have more creativity in what they learn, and education should be better funded to make it more accessible.²¹¹

Discussion Questions

1. As occupations and the way people interact within society evolve, what should be taught in American public schools' education to reflect these changes?
2. How should public education be funded? Should there be an increase in funding from the federal government?
3. How can the school system be made more equitable than it is right now?
4. What can be done to support the shortage of teachers in public schools?
5. Who should be responsible for creating a school's curriculum?
6. What measures should be taken to support students' safety in a school environment?

²⁰⁹ "Solutions," *Everytown for Gun Safety*, <https://www.everytown.org/solutions/>.

²¹⁰ Jenn Hatfield, "Partisan divides over K-12 education in 8 charts," *Pew Research Center*, June 5, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/05/partisan-divides-over-k-12-education-in-8-charts/>.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

Additional Resources

Article | Partisan Divides Over K-12 Education in 8 Charts: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/05/partisan-divides-over-k-12-education-in-8-charts/>

Article | State-By-State Teacher Shortages (And What They're Doing About It): <https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/education/education-reform/hold-how-each-state-is-solving-its-teacher-shortage-and-could-you-become-a-teacher/>

Article | The Failure of American Public Education: <https://fee.org/articles/the-failure-of-american-public-education/>

Article | 18 Reasons the U.S. Education System is Failing: <https://www.theedadvocate.org/10-reasons-the-u-s-education-system-is-failing/>

Article | Education's Biggest Problem Is a Lack of Money, Many Americans Agree: <https://www.edweek.org/education/educations-biggest-problem-is-a-lack-of-money-many-americans-agree/2019/08>

Bibliography

- Allegretto, Sylvia. "The Teacher Pay Penalty Has Hit a New High: Trends in Teacher Wages and Compensation through 2021." *Economic Policy Institute*, August 16, 2022. <https://www.epi.org/publication/teacher-pay-penalty-2022/>.
- Allegretto, Report • By Sylvia. "Public Education Funding in the U.S. Needs an Overhaul: How a Larger Federal Role Would Boost Equity and Shield Children from Disinvestment during Downturns." *Economic Policy Institute*, 2022. <https://www.epi.org/publication/public-education-funding-in-the-us-needs-an-overhaul/>.
- An, Susie. "Public Schools Try Ditching A-to-F Letter Grades." *NPR*, February 28, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/local/309/2020/02/28/810325384/public-schools-try-ditching-a-to-f-letter-grades>.
- "Brown v. Board of Education." *History.com*. October 27, 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/brown-v-board-of-education-of-topeka>.
- Cusick, Julia, Madeline Shepherd, Emma Lofgren, Jean Ross, and Rose Khattar. "Book Banning, Curriculum Restrictions, and the Politicization of U.S. Schools." *Center for American Progress*, February 22, 2023. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/book-banning-curriculum-restrictions-and-the-politicization-of-u-s-schools/>.
- Dorn, Emma, Bryan Hancock, Jimmy Sarakatsannis, and Ellen Viruleg. "COVID-19 and Education: The Lingering Effects of Unfinished Learning." *McKinsey & Company*, July 27, 2021. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning>.
- Edsall, Thomas B. "There's a Reason There Aren't Enough Teachers in America. Many Reasons, Actually." *The New York Times*, December 14, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/14/opinion/teacher-shortage-education.html>.
- "Education." *Democratic National Committee*. <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/education/>.
- "History and Evolution of Public Education in the US." *Graduate School of Education & Human Development, George Washington University*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606970.pdf>.
- "Education Reform." <https://www.letsgolearn.com/resources/education-reform/>.
- Everytown. "The Long, Shameful List of Gunfire on School Grounds in America." *Everytown Research & Policy*, February 28, 2023. <https://everytownresearch.org/maps/gunfire-on-school-grounds/>.
- García, Emma, and Elaine Weiss. "The Teacher Shortage Is Real, Large and Growing, and Worse than We Thought: The First Report in 'The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market' Series." *Economic Policy Institute*, March 2019. <https://www.epi.org/publication/the-teacher-shortage-is-real-large-and-growing-and-worse-than-we-thought-the-first-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/>.
- Griffith, David. "What the Democrats and Republicans Stand For on Education: Excerpts from party platforms." *ACSD*, October 2, 2020. <https://www.ascd.org/blogs/what-the-democrats-and-republicans-stand-for-on-education-excerpts-from-party-platforms>.
- Gore, Hogan. "Texas Gov. Greg Abbott Signs Ban on 'Sexually Explicit' Books in School Libraries into Law." *Statesman*, June 13, 2023. <https://www.statesman.com/story/news/2023/06/12/hb-900-texas-book-ban-gov-greg-abbott-sign-banning-sexually-explicit-content-public-school-libraries/70314516007/>.

Harper, Amelia. "Can Ditching Letter Grades Improve Student Learning and Engagement?" *K-12 Dive*, February 15, 2019. <https://www.k12dive.com/news/can-ditching-letter-grades-improve-student-learning-and-engagement/548292/>.

Hatfield, Jenn. "Partisan Divides over K-12 Education in 8 Charts." *Pew Research Center*, June 5, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/05/partisan-divides-over-k-12-education-in-8-charts/>.

"How Bad Are the Public Schools? - Is There a Crisis? | the Battle over School Choice | Frontline." *PBS*. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/vouchers/howbad/crisis.html>.

"How the American Education System Is Failing: Proximity Learning." *ProxLearn*. August 2, 2023. <https://www.proxlearn.com/blog/how-the-american-education-system-is-failing>.

"In 2022, a Majority of Republicans Said K-12 Schools Were Having a Negative Effect on the U.S." *Pew Research Center*, June 5, 2023. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/05/partisan-divides-over-k-12-education-in-8-charts/sr_23-05-31_k12partisandivides_1/.

Kagan, Julia. "The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA): Definition and Provisions." *Investopedia*, June 13, 2023. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/h/higher-education-act-of-1965-hea.asp>.

Kraft, Matthew A., and Melissa Arnold Lyon. "The Rise and Fall of the Teaching Profession: Prestige, Interest, Preparation, and Satisfaction over the Last Half Century." *EdWorkingPapers.com*, November, 2022. <https://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai22-679>.

Langreo, Lauraine. "5 Strategies to Tackle Teacher Shortages." *Education Week*, February 10, 2023. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/5-strategies-to-tackle-teacher-shortages/2023/02>.

Mervosh, Sarah. "Florida's New Black History Standards Have Drawn Backlash. Who Wrote Them?" *The New York Times*, July 28, 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/28/us/african-american-history-standards-florida-task-force.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&state=default&module=styln-us-schools&variant=show®ion=MAIN_CONTENT_1&block=storyline_top_links_recirc.

Mervosh, Sarah. "Panic Buttons, Classroom Locks: How Schools Have Boosted Security." *The New York Times*, January 12, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/12/us/school-shootings-security.html>.

OECD. "Equity and Quality in Education." *OECD Publishing*, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264130852-en>.

"Republican and Democratic Parents have Different Views of the Influence Government, School Boards, Parents and Teachers Have on What Schools Teach." *Pew Research Center*, June 5, 2023. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/05/partisan-divides-over-k-12-education-in-8-charts/sr_23-05-31_k12partisandivides_5/.

"Republican Views on Education and Jobs." *Republican Jobs*. <https://www.republicanjobs.gop/resources-republican-jobs/republican-views-on-education-and-jobs/>.

Rich, Steven, John Woodrow Cox, Linda Chong, Monica Ulmanu, John Muyskens, and Lucas Trevor. "There Have Been 386 School Shootings since Columbine." *The Washington Post*, April 3, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/interactive/school-shootings-database/>.

Santhanam, Laura. "Concern about Gun Violence in American Schools Is on the Rise, New Poll Shows." *PBS*, May 24, 2023. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/a-year-after-uvalde-support-rises-for-controlling-gun-violence>.

- “School Funding Issues: How Decreasing Budgets Are Impacting Student Learning & Achievement: American University.” *School of Education Online*, December 21, 2022. <https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/school-funding-issues/>.
- "Sex Discrimination: Overview of the Law." *U.S. Department of Education*, April 4, 2023. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/guid/ocr/sexoverview.html>.
- Skandera, Hanna. "America's Education System is Failing—But a Growing School Choice Movement Believes It Has The Solution." *Fortune*, June 23, 2023. <https://fortune.com/2023/06/23/americas-education-system-is-failing-but-a-growing-school-choice-movement-believes-it-has-the-solution/>.
- Staff, VERIFY. “The Burnout Equation: America’s Teacher Shortage Crisis.” *verifythis.com*, May 9, 2023. <https://www.verifythis.com/article/news/verify/education-verify/the-burnout-equation-inside-americas-teacher-shortage-crisis-verify-in-focus-report/536-acd5ddf8-7338-4ec5-989b-decbab92c22c>.
- Staff, WeAreTeachers. “2023 Teacher Shortage Statistics Prove We Need to Fix This Profession.” *We Are Teachers*, June 29, 2023. <https://www.weareteachers.com/teacher-shortage-statistics/>.
- "The STEM vs. STEAM Debate." *National Inventors Hall of Fame*. <https://www.invent.org/blog/trends-stem/stem-steam-defined/>.
- "Wide Partisan Differences in Views of Most Federal Agencies, Including the Department of Education." *Pew Research Center*, June 5, 2023. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/05/partisan-divides-over-k-12-education-in-8-charts/sr_23-05-31_k12partisandivides_2/.

