**Unit I, District Question #1- May 2014**

*How did both classical republicanism and the natural rights philosophers influence the Founder’s views about government?*

* *What are the essential differences between classical republicanism and natural rights philosophy?*
* *Why do both classical republicanism and natural rights philosophers stress the need for education and preparation for citizenship?*

**P.1** Both classical republicans and natural rights philosophers influenced the founders’ views

about government. We begin our explanation in ancient Rome. This model of classical republicanism was based on the concept that the best society is one that promotes the common good over the desires of the individual.

**P.2** Our framers stressed the importance of the common good, or, as they stated in the Preamble, the general welfare. These men used the term “public” or “civic virtue” to mean the willingness of citizens to put aside their personal obligations to work on behalf of the public good. They also valued moral education, because they felt it was necessary to preserve the virtue and integrity of future generations.

**P.3** Unlike America’s large and diverse population classical republicans valued small homogenous communities as a way to further the common good.

**P.4** On the other hand, natural rights is also a critical part of our society. This philosophy peaked during the Enlightenment era, where John Locke insisted in his *Second Treatise on Civil Government* that the rights of life, liberty, and property are guaranteed to every person. Locke’s ideas of personal rights stemmed from his experiences in the English Civil War, and were hugely influential to the founding generation, as we can see in both the Constitution and Declaration of Independance.

**P.5** This idea of natural rights was enhanced by the social contract theory, which can be found in ancient Stoic and Roman Canon law but became a modern concept through the works of Thomas Hobbes. The founding generation argued that a social contract was the only way to truly protect the individual rights that everyone should be given. This was evidenced throughout American history as early as the Mayflower Compact, and later through state constitutions.

**P.6** The key difference between natural rights philosophy and classical republicanism is the emphasis on the community as a whole on one hand, and the good of the individual on the other.

**P.7** Universal healthcare is a perfect example of the idea of classical republicanism: although every individual must sacrifice and pay more money for their health care, the community as a whole benefits because everyone can access this care. This was affirmed most recently by the Supreme Court in *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius.* On the other hand, advocates against gun control legislation base their entire argument on natural rights philosophy and personal rights.

**P.8** Despite their differences, both classical republicans and natural rights philosophers stressed the need for education and preparation for citizenship. Why? If we are to achieve a workable balance between the two conflicting philosophies, we must produce educated, informed citizens that are able to recreate that balance on their own throughout history. Informed, educated citizens make intelligent voting decisions, participate actively in their communities, and create positive change within their societies.

**P.9** To conclude, we note that there is a core of of knowledge and skills that young people must develop to achieve a reasoned and informed commitment to the ideals of constitutional democracy. Parents, churches, organizations, political parties, and now the internet all provide opportunities not only to learn, but, perhaps more importantly, to employ our knowledge in our communities, our states, the nation, and the world. Movements such as Occupy Wall Street in America and the Middle East’s Arab Spring prove that people throughout the world are active and engaged in their countries and communities, and this value must be championed, continued and supported throughout the world.

**P.10**  Thank you for your time. We are now eager to answer your questions.