Madison Smith

Roger Soder

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Leadership, Democracy, Schools, and the Presidential Election

As a member of a democracy, our societal responsibilities are drilled into us. There are campaigns during the election season to get people registered to vote. At the University of Washington, every time we sign up for classes we are given the option to register to vote. There is pressure to be aware of the issues- from the humanitarian crisis in Aleppo to the elected officials for the impending Trump administration. We are expected to stay true to American values and uphold the Constitution. There are many responsibilities within a democracy and citizens are trained from an early age to fulfil those responsibilities.

Sometimes it is tempting not to fulfill these responsibilities because it feels as though these small acts have negligible impact on society. One vote counts for so little and it is difficult to find anything that we can do about the war in Syria. It seems as if there is no point to go out of our way to fulfill a responsibility if it does not make a difference. Other times, we may feel this way but still fulfill these responsibilities due to societal pressure.

But these duties are not negligible. While our individual responsibilities sometimes seem negligible, they have a much greater impact on a larger scale. Not only do the votes of the entire society have a large impact on society in general, but simply the fact that our society has the ability to vote has a significant impact on our society.

In this paper, I will be looking at the public’s obligations and how these obligations impact leaders, as well as how the obligations of leaders impact society. I will take a close look at the recent presidential election, what this means for our society and what factors could have influenced the outcome of the election. Our connection to the recent presidential election will provide concrete examples of how the general public and leadership are connected, and how a change in this relationship can impact society as a whole. This paper will additionally tackle the impact of schools on the public and leaders.

In this paper I have three main points. The first argument is that leaders help form a more thoughtful public. I argue that the decisions made by leaders impact the general public and have the power to turn the general public into a more thoughtful public. Second,  I argue that a more thoughtful public has the ability to influence leadership. These two arguments form a sort of cycle where a change in A impacts B, and this change in B in turn impacts A. Finally, I argue that schools have a large role in creating the more thoughtful public. I argue that schools have the ability to create the type of people needed to function in a more thoughtful public. I also tie these arguments to the recent presidential election by explaining why the election turned out the way it did and what certain characteristics of election means for the public in the United States.

**Leadership Helps Form a More Thoughtful Public**

A leader should try to form a more thoughtful public. As one of the propositions says, “leadership involves creating and sustaining a more thoughtful public, a public capable of rising above itself.” (Soder) In other words, a task of a leader is to create a public that can think for itself. But a more thoughtful public, like nearly everything else, will always fall apart. Just as it is the job of the leader to create a thoughtful public, it is also the job of the leader to sustain the more thoughtful public and recover the more thoughtful public when it ultimately fails. A second proposition says that “what it takes for a leader to sustain isn’t quite the same as what it takes to initiate, and neither of these approach what it takes to recover and reconstitute when the organization or regime falls apart.” (Soder) A leader must be able to perform many different tasks in order to sustain a more thoughtful public because creating, maintaining, and sustaining a more thoughtful public takes different skills.

Before I go into detail about how a leader creates a more thoughtful public, ‘a more thoughtful public’ must be defined. A more thoughtful public is a society that is aware of the issues around them. The public recognizes its responsibility to know what is going on in the world and is actively involved in changing the world. Such a public asks questions, thinks critically about the issues, and is careful to make good decisions. Such a public is able to express ideas and opinions freely. While what a more thoughtful public looks like may vary slightly in different contexts, they should all share these characteristics.

The creation of such a public is not a simple or easy task, and it reduces the power of the leader because the general public has more knowledge and power over their lives than in a public where the leader has complete control over the lives of the public. But the creation of such a public greatly benefits both the society and the leader. Such a public will be more likely to respect their leaders and government because it better understands why a leader makes certain decisions and they have more influence over the decisions that are made. The public is more likely to work with the government rather than around the government. This makes the public easier to work with. This benefits the leader, because they will have to put less effort in subduing and controlling the public.

There are several actions that a leader can take to create a more thoughtful public. One aim that a leader can have to create a more thoughtful public is to create a democracy rather than a despotism. In a democratic society, the general public has more influence over their lives and the laws that govern their lives and are more likely to seriously consider issues and take action against behavior and legislature they do not like. People can gather in large groups, they can vote, amongst other characteristics. All these characteristics give the public the power and influence to govern their own lives. In despotic societies, the exact opposite is true. For instance, modern Russia could never be a more thoughtful public because the public is controlled by fear and have little respect for the law. In a democratic society, people, in general, have influence and respect for the government and their leaders, which draws them closer to the government and allows them to interact with the government. In despotic societies, the opposite happens. The general public has little respect for the government and tries to work around the government. This causes a gap to widen between the government and the people. In order for a more thoughtful public to develop, the government and the public have to work towards a better society. This cannot happen in a despotic society. Therefore, a democratic society creates a stronger relationship between the government and people and this relationship is essential for a leader to create a more thoughtful public.

For example, Lincoln helped to create a more thoughtful public during his presidency. One of the most important actions he took was to abolish slavery. In order to do this, Lincoln established a strong relationship with the public. After he built this relationship, he gained their trust and was able to reason with the public. This allowed Lincoln to persuade the public. He also utilizes the characteristics of the public to achieve his goals. He uses the public’s thoughtfulness to get them to consider both sides of the arguments. He uses points of pride, namely freedom and the Declaration of Independence, to argue against slavery. He connected the freedom that the people sought from England to the freedom that Lincoln was seeking for slaves and pointed out that while the United States was free from the English, not every American was free. In general, Lincoln worked with the public and guided it towards what he wanted rather than fighting against it and this, among a few other factors, is what allowed Lincoln to create a more thoughtful public and abolish slavery in the United States.

Even if a leader has a close relationship with the people, a leader must be able to convince other people to follow and implement their ideas. In order to do this, a leader must use persuasion. Persuasion is used to convince other people that one’s idea qualifies as good enough to be put into action. Persuasion is important because ideas are useless if a leader cannot convince anyone to follow them or put them into action. Churchill was one politician who was a master of persuasion. Despite the usefulness and importance of persuasion, we tend to see persuasion as negative due to car salesmen, advertising, and politicians and the unpleasant role these people occupy in our lives.

For instance, politics is one area where persuasion has a negative connotation. Persuasion is the main tool used by politicians, yet when politics are seen unfavorably, persuasion is seen negatively. This is interesting to think about in terms of the recent presidential election. Donald Trump made it clear in the recent election that people dislike politicians through the success of his #DrainTheSwamp hashtag. This hashtag refers to the elimination of corrupt politicians from the American government, particularly congress. This negative view of politicians significantly hurt Hillary Clinton’s persuasive effort. Her attempts at persuasion were not taken seriously because of her reputation as a long-time politician. This caused the public to be distrustful of the persuasive techniques used by Clinton. Donald Trump seemed to benefits from this mistrust because of his status as a businessman and not a politician. There did not seem to be nearly the same level of mistrust because of his status of a businessman. This caused many of his arguments and ‘truths’ were more readily accepted than those proposed by Clinton.

Related to persuasion is the use of language employed by politicians. A leader can create a more thoughtful public through the use of a particular sort of language. George Orwellargues that poor language leads to poor society while good language leads to a good society. He argues that the English language has slowly been declining. People have begun to overuse and misunderstand imagery, over-complicate verbs, and use pretentious diction that clouds the meaning and makes language less precise. (Orwell) He claims that this decline is partly economical and political, but also due to the decline of society. He argues that the decline of language leads to the decline of society, which in turn leads to the further decline of language- creating a cycle. (Orwell)

But he also argues that the cycle can work in the opposite direction. A leader can use precise language with a precise meaning and that will help to swing the cycle in the opposite direction. If ‘good’ language is used, then a more thoughtful public will be created which will further create ‘good language.’ Orwell claims that our society is going downwards, but it could just as easily go upwards. (Orwell)

Orwell also claims that political writing is bad writing. In his chapter, he wrote that the “present political chaos is connected to the decay of language.” (Orwell) He claims that in political writing the same ideas and claims tend to be repeated. He writes that politicians are like machines, mindlessly repeating the same ideas in big vague phrases like ‘population transfer’. These vague phrases that can be interpreted in a variety of ways and avoid creating images of the truth. Rather, politicians tend to use language to blur issues and cover up the truth. He writes that political language is meant to make “lies sound truthful and murder respectable.” (Orwell)

Orwell’s argument is evident in the recent election. Clinton tended to speak in complicated language and a vocabulary that was distinctly ‘political.’ Her immigrant plans were complex and could not be summed up in a single catch phrase. In place of a long-winded explanation, she would say vague phrases that could be interpreted any which way. On the other hand, Trump used simple language that was distinctly ‘unpolitical.’ His ideas were simple- ‘build a wall’ and ‘deport illegal immigrants.’ His ideas were new and unique, which set him apart from the rest of the presidential candidates- especially Clinton. The simplicity of his language benefited Trump - he did win the election after all. The public understood exactly what he was proposing and backed his ideas.

While creating a more thoughtful public is essential to a leader’s duties, it is also important that a leader can sustain a more thoughtful public. Many of these factors that contribute to the creation of a more thoughtful public also cross over to sustaining a more thoughtful public. For instance, language and the continuation of a democratic society are still necessary for a more thoughtful public to be maintained.

That being said, everything will falter or fail, and that includes a more thoughtful public. As another proposition states, “A more thoughtful public must not only be created and sustained, but, given that things inevitably fall apart, must be recovered and reconstituted.” (Soder) Therefore, it is essential to the continuation of a more thoughtful public that a leader be able to recover a more thoughtful public.

While there are many reactions that a leader could have to a problem- do nothing, ignore the issue because we do not want to deal with it or give it any more attention, listen, sympathize and do nothing, get rid of the troublemakers but it is quite difficult to just get rid of someone currently, get revenge, but that has its limits and dangers, acknowledge the problem but control it by controlling the people involved, or run away. These all cause long term ecological problems. Therefore, a leader needs to learn more about reconciliation and reconstitution.

Reconciliation and reconstitution differ from the solutions above because it deals with the actual problem rather than simply trying to avoid or work around the problem. There are multiple different ways to deal with reconciliation and reconstitution depending on the depth and scope of the problem. When the problem only involves a few people, the key is to acknowledge the problem and find something that both parties can agree on. Leaders should be reluctant to push for forgiveness because oftentimes complete forgiveness can be a bit ambitious. For large scale reconciliation and reconstitution, it is important to open up public discourse about the problem. People will need to recognize the past, accept it as truth, and apologize before allowing everyone to move on. Especially in a large-scale situation, complete forgiveness is unlikely. It is perhaps more reasonable to expect that everyone cohabitates without violence. One of the most important aspects to reconciliation and reconstitution is time. People need time to process their emotions and gain a large picture before being willing to forgive or apologize.

Soder argues that there are a few specifics actions that a leader can take to promote reconciliation. A leader must look at the problem from a large scale, rather than agonizing over the details. A leader must be careful not to deceive other people- including themself. A leader must involve everyone in seeking the truth and make it a task for everyone. A leader must also put time and resources into these tasks and recognize the connection between reconciliation and a free democratic society. Finally, a leader must recognize elements needed for reconciliation are likely found in a democratic society. (Soder) It is essential that a leader who wishes to make steps towards reconciliation and reconstitution take these steps - especially in the large scale.

Perhaps most importantly, the creation, maintenance, and recovery of a more thoughtful public requires that the leader is capable of political action. In order for the leader to impact the more thoughtful public, the leader must be able to take needed action. Political action it is a bit more complicated than it sounds because the action is often out of the control of the leader. A leader must find people to approve his idea and then more people to implement his idea. Therefore, a leader must make sure the action they want to take is not only his priority, but also the priority of other people. In order for a leader to be able to do this, the leader must get other people to recognize the problem he is seeing. For instance, while an action that prevents the release of additional greenhouse gases may be good and beneficial, that action will not be taken unless the leader is able to get people to recognize the problem of global warming. If the people around the leader think global warming is a hoax, then no one will be willing to input the resources needed to take this action. Additionally, the leader must be able to get attention to this issue for a substantial amount of time. If global warming is the type of story that spends a few days in the news before being taken out by some newer, more interesting story, then no substantial change will be done. Sure, someone might start a petition or start calling their congressmen, but if the attention does not last, then in a few days everyone will have forgotten about global warming. Fortunately, this is not what has happened with global warming. While not everyone agrees that it exists, global warming has been fortunate enough to get sustained attention for a number of years. This has allowed leaders to pass bills and take actions against the release of more greenhouse gases.

In the end, not only do leaders have a significant impact on the public, but it is actually a leader’s responsibility to sustain a more thoughtful public. In order to do that, a leader must be capable of creating, sustaining, and recovering a more thoughtful public. As a leader, it is important to create the best society possible, and in order to do that, a leader must know how their actions impact the greater public.

**A More Thoughtful Public Helps Form Leaders**

While individuals may not have a ton of power, together these individuals create a powerful public. Such a public has the power to change many aspects of the society they live in. One aspect such a public has the power to change is its leaders. Often we think about how the leader guides and influences the public, but we often forget that the larger public has the same, if not more power to influence its leaders. The public has so much power because the public is the context in which a leader functions. As one of the propositions says “Leadership always has a political context; leadership in a democracy is necessarily different than leadership in other kinds of political regimes.” The public changes the leadership. For instance, whether a public is a democracy or not changes the leadership. The smaller desires and tendencies of the public also contain a lot of power.

The most obvious way in which the public impacts leadership is in a democracy. In a democracy, the leadership is elected by the public. The public has control over who is in many public leadership positions and who is or is not a leader. This has an enormous impact over the priorities of the new leadership and future of the society.  For instance, the decision of the American people to elect Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton obviously had an enormous impact on the leadership of this country.

One way the public can change leaders is through the information that the public gives the leadership. The public is where leaders seek the information on which they base their decisions. Therefore, the public must be aware of the information that the leader is working with and how that impacts their own interests. The leader and the public must recognize that when the public give an excess of flattery or other misinformation, it can impact the decisions made by the leader. The leader must seek information but the public must also be willing to give up that information. The public must be honest with leaders and give the leader accurate information. The public must form a relationship with the leader where the public is giving information and the leader takes information. If a leader is highly respected and appreciated and the information will reflect badly on them, then there is a tendency to want to please that leader and give them only the information they want to hear. The accuracy of the information that the leader is receiving is essential. This is the information on which the leader bases a lot of their decisions which in turn impacts the public. Therefore, it is in the public’s interest to monitor the information that the leader is receiving.

The public must also respect the leader in order to have a close relationship with the leadership. In order to do that, the public must recognize their influence and power over laws. They must be willing to change those laws if they disagree with the laws. They must insist for the power, elect officials they respect, have fair elections, people need to have ability to vote and run for office. The requirement of a good government is ‘elected officials,’ ‘free and fair elections’, inclusive suffrage’ or the right for adults to vote, ‘right to run for office’, freedom of expression’, ‘alternative information’, associational autonomy, or the ‘right to form relatively independent associations or organizations.’ These give the general public more power to control the leadership, which allows the public to more easily respect the government. These are important priorities for any governmental leader to have in order to be respected by the public.

An interesting example of this would be the recent election. While the majority of the American population did not vote for the president-elect, he was still elected, and many do not respect him or his politics as evident by the political protests that followed the election. During his presidential campaign, he also raised concerns about corruption in the presidential election and recently the CIA has reported that Russia influenced the elections to sway them towards Trump. Therefore, one could say that either we do not have fair elections or many perceive that we do not have fair elections. Additionally, while we say that every citizen has the ability to run for office, money and connections have a huge part in determining whether or not a candidate has a fair chance at getting elected. In the recent election, hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on campaigning. (Narayanswamy) It was also uncovered that the Clinton campaign had many connections that the Sanders campaign did not, and that was a huge reason why the Clinton campaign won the primary. Therefore, the current American presidential elections are not necessarily promoting a more thoughtful public.

In order to sustain a more thoughtful public, a leader must be able to seek information. Roger Soder argues that in order to seek information, a leader must be able to organize councils to give information, claim not to know information in order to save face and get more details, ask indirect questions, and pretend to know more than one actually does, among other tasks. A leader must actively seek information because a good leader will recognize that powerful leadership will prevent people from telling the full truth and that optimism and preconceived notions will prevent complete information seeking. A good leader will also recognize the importance of how they seek the information because how one obtains information gives information about oneself, the process of information retrieval provides information about the person retrieving data, the information topic and their relationship and not seeking information also provides information.

Many of the factors that allow leaders to impact the public and allow the public to impact the leaders are a cycle. A more thoughtful public forms the leadership, and the leadership forms the more thoughtful public. When something about the public changes, then the leadership is impacted and the leadership should adjust to that new change. Each forms and is formed by the other. For instance, when the public decides that it wants to tackle LGTBQ+ issues, then the leaders are under pressure to change laws and perspectives involving LGTBQ+ issues or face public dissatisfaction and possibly losing their job. Likewise, if a leader decides they want to do something about global warming then they have to the power to bring global warming to the public’s awareness and implement programs and legislature to change how society deals with global warming which will impact the public. Therefore, the public is formed by leaders and the leaders are formed by the public.

Many of the factors that impact the public or leaders cannot actually be separated at all. If something impacts a leader, it will likely find a way to impact a more thoughtful public, which will in turn impacts the leader. The relationship between the leader and the general public is immensely complex and connected. We like to simplify this relationship into a simple one-way relationship where the leader changes and forms the public. But in a true thoughtful public, this is not the case. In a true thoughtful public, the public must be able to change the leader as well. All this being said, many of the conditions and factors that allow a leader to form a more thoughtful public also allow a more thoughtful public to influence leadership and vis versa. Both the leadership and the more general public must work towards a democracy, and specifically conditions necessary for a democracy. The public must insist on certain actions in order for them to be able to respect the leadership and the leadership has to perform these actions. Oftentimes, leaders and the public must work towards the same goals, giving and accepting the same changes and ideas, and respecting each other along the way. Therefore, the creation of a more thoughtful public and a healthy cycle between a more thoughtful public and leadership depends on a deep level of respect and the willingness to work together towards the same goals.

Once again, we will turn to how this relates to the recent presidential elections. In many ways, this recent presidential election demonstrates how the United States is failing at its goal to sustain a more thoughtful public. Rather than work together, the president-elect ran his campaign on a rhetoric of deporting and slander against members of our society of a certain ethnicity, religion, and gender- and won. The presidential election has so alienated certain members of our society from our government that we no longer are willing to work with our government. Social media outlets, particularly Tumblr, are embracing their role as a platform to fight against our president-elect. Recently, Tumblr created a page called ‘Action on Tumblr’ and it is meant to be used as a platform to discuss, and ultimately take action on social justice issues, and a popular topic of discussion is Donald Trump and what to do when one strongly disagrees with politicians. In the end, the recent presidential elections has revealed a lot of discord in the relationship between the general public and the American leadership, which has prevented them from working together, and has the possibility of negatively impacting the thoughtful public.

While individuals may not have a ton of power, together the public has immense power over its leaders. This cycle between leadership and the public as well as respect between the two parties is essential for the continuation of a more thoughtful public. This cycle is something that impacts our lives as general citizens and allows us to impacts other people’s lives. It gives us power and influence within society which in turn allows the people to respect the law.

**Schools Impact the Cycle Between Leadership and the Public**

This cycle between leadership and the public does not exist in a vacuum. There are many factors that work with or against this cycle. There are the rippling effects from decisions made by other world leaders, the impacts of recent natural disasters, among others. One of the big contributors to this cycle is schools. Schooling has such a large impact on this cycle because of the large impact schools have over the vast majority of the population. School is experienced by everyone, regardless of background. Schools have such a large impact on the future generation. One individual can spend up to 14,040 hours of their early life in school during K-12. That amount of time tends to have a significant impact on people.

The basic information learned in schools is the foundation of knowledge needed to build the skills needed to be more involved citizens. For instance, geography helps us to understand the Syrian civil war and our knowledge about the three branches of government help us to understand the function of the executive branch. The knowledge we gain in schools helps us to build a foundation needed to understand new information. We cannot read the news and learn about the issues if we cannot read. We cannot understand the importance of our president without understanding the wider purpose of the government. Without this foundation of knowledge, we would be unable to function in society as active, contributing members of society, much less be able to contribute to a more thoughtful public.

But schools are not only where we learn to read and perform algebra, school also shapes citizens that contribute to a more thoughtful public. An education forms citizens that recognize the power of knowledge, actively pursue knowledge and know how to get new knowledge. Schools also teach people how to critically analyze new information and other skills they need to be active members of a more thoughtful public. They give students the knowledge they need to understand and make good decisions about society and their lives. Schools help create people that keep and fight for their liberty. For instance, language arts teaches students to gather information from dependable sources. We should not gather our information from TMZ or even Wikipedia because some sources can, and sometimes will, post fictional information. English teaches us how to critically analyze texts and form our own opinions on texts which helps us later when we need to form our own opinions on a particular policy or proposed legislature. Schools are how society creates individuals that make up a more thoughtful public.

Roger Soderargues that there are twelve conditions that schools teach. He also argues these conditions help form a democracy, which is a key requirement to a more thoughtful public. The twelve conditions that are introduced and taught in schools are trust, exchange,’ ‘respect for civil discourse,’ ‘recognition of the need for E. Pluribus Unum,’ ‘free and open inquiry,’ and ‘knowledge of rights,’ among others. (Soder) Schools teach students to trust the government by teaching them about the government and how it functions. Schools are also a prime location to learn how to talk about ideas and argument different points without violence which helps students learn respect for civil discourse. Schools also teach students about the American identity while also allowing students to form their own identity. Traditions like saying the pledge of allegiance to the flag each morning and singing *The Star Spangled Banner* also promotes a sense of national identity with the students which creates a recognition of the need for e pluribus unum. Social studies classes teach us about the founding of the United States and our rights as American citizens. We have a right to gather and speak our minds. We have rights regardless of our religion, gender, race, or economic background - in other words schools promote the knowledge of rights. We have the right to ask questions in school, which promotes free and open inquiry. In other words, many of these conditions necessary for a democracy that Soder talks about his in chapter “The Political Context of Leadership” are taught in schools.

Likewise, schools can also work against this cycle. They can discourage critical thinking and teach students to accept orders blindly. Teachers can criticize their country, destroying any sense of national identity and pride within the students. Schools can restrict freedoms, including the freedom of speech and prevent students from exploring new ideas that do not conform to those taught by the school. This would in turn restrict the student ability to have a civil discourse, which also limits other conditions necessary for a democracy. For instance, North Korea is anything but a democracy. Schools in North Korea disallow anything but praises for their leader. The students are not taught to think critically, but rather are taught facts and how to follow instructions. (Tertitskiy) This environment prevents students from developing into the type of people who could contribute to a democracy.

But schools do not just impact the public. Schools impact leaders as well. Schools do not impact leaders nearly as directly as society, unless the leader was once a member of the public and were given the same education and skills as the public. Rather, schools tend to impact leaders through the public. If a public is eager to work with the leader towards some goal, rather than around the government, then life will be much easier for the leaders. Also, if the leader is the leader of a democracy, it helps immensely if the public understands how to maintain a democracy and work towards the conditions necessary to maintain the democracy. They will have people who vote and make decisions based on the value of the idea rather than some other arbitrary factor. Schools are an important part of a thoughtful public because they help leaders function well.

Soder even argues that leaders do not only have an interest in schools, but leaders have an obligation to maintain schools in a way that ensures that students can do more than just good test scores. (Soder) It is a leader’s duty to improve society and if society can be bettered through schools, then leaders have that responsibility to make sure that happens.

The people who voted in the recent presidential election were educated in schools. Schools among other factors, are what formed a public that was persuaded by the presidential-elect’s ideas and his persuasive techniques. Schools are what informed voters of their rights to vote and gave them the foundational knowledge needed to understand issues like immigration, among other hot button topics in the election.

Clearly, there was a lot of societal unrest after the election. There were political protests for days after the election and the election ignited a flood of pro-diversity, inclusive, mission statements for a variety of organizations. Given this, we must ask ourselves if schools are preparing people for the society we want to live in. Obviously, schools are not the only contributing factor to the election result. There were plenty of additional factors involved. However, schools hold a huge part in shaping the public. Therefore, given the recent election, we must ask ourselves, is there anything more schools can do to educate a public that is willing to consider the other side? Are schools giving students the foundational knowledge they need to truly comprehend the difficult issues that face our society? Schools have a lot of power in their position to influence the next generation, and we must ask ourselves how could schools change to better prepare the population for the society we want to live in.

Given the importance of schools to our society, it would make sense if politicians put a lot of support into schools. It would make sense that leaders would want to ensure that the next generation would have the education needed to be active member of a democracy. However, K-12 teacher’s annual salary is not very high- an average $45k starting salary and an average $60k salary. If we want the best people to be training the next generation, it makes sense that we would offer a competitive salary to attract the best people. However, the salary teachers are currently receiving is average at best. Additionally, the government spends $449 billion on K-12 schooling but only 9-10% of that is paid by the federal government. The vast majority of funding comes from the state budget and taxes. But in states like Washington, the state still does not provide enough funding for the schooling and the state is fined for each day where not enough funding is directed towards K-12 schooling. As we said in class, if something is not in the budget, then it might as well not exist. While K-12 still exists in the budget, it takes up a small portion of the budget given the percent of the population invested in K-12 education.

One of the most important ways we can impact the general public and leaders is through schools. We have the ability to create a public that is more thoughtful. A public that thinks critically. You could argue either way if we have that public right now. But I know the recent presidential election made at least some of us lose faith in the American public partly because the agendas that won the election are not evident of a more thoughtful public, but rather an ignorant public. One of the easiest ways in which we can impact the public is through investing in K-12 schooling and giving schooling the resources they need to do their job well.

**Conclusion**

Leaders and the public have a complicated relationship and there any number of factors impacting and influencing this relationship. However, one of the most important factors is schools. Schools have an enormous impact on our society, but we often overlook schools and think of them more as some place to send our kids while all the adults are at work. We need to recognize the immense power that schools hold and the resources they need to do their job well. Given the discontent that followed the recent election, I think that many people would agree that something needs to change. We need to do something to prevent a similar situation from occurring again. The most effective way to prevent this is through schools. We must identify the points on which schools can improve and provide them the resources they need to make those changes.

We may mindlessly fulfill our responsibilities as members of a democracy, but it is essential that we understand the greater meanings behind these responsibilities. We must understand what our responsibilities mean for those who govern our society and how these responsibilities, as insignificant as they may seem, impact the greater society. This knowledge is essential to a true understanding of how our position as citizens in a democracy impact the general public and those who lead us. In turn, hopefully, we as citizens are not only more eager to fulfill these duties, but take these duties more seriously as we learn how these responsibilities have a far larger impact than we previously imagined.

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