

"We The People" State Competition Set for January 9th

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PHOENIX, Ariz. (January 5, 2004) - The Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education is pleased to announce that ten of Arizona's top high school civics and government classrooms will compete at the **17th annual "We The People...The Citizen and The Constitution" State Competition** on Friday, January 9th 2004. Opening ceremonies will begin at 8 a.m. in the La Sala Ballroom on the campus of Arizona State University West (located at 4701 W. Thunderbird Road in Glendale, Arizona). Arizona Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Jones and Vice Chief Justice Ruth McGregor will be on hand to honor participating teachers and students at the 5 p.m. awards ceremony.

"We the People" is an intense semester-long curriculum that explores the philosophical underpinnings of U.S. Constitution, the history surrounding it, and the modern-day application of the Constitution to American life. "We the People" promotes civic awareness and responsibility in students and strengthens students' critical thinking and public speaking skills.

The program culminates in a simulated congressional hearing where students defend their knowledge of the Constitution in front of a panel of community judges. At this year's state competition, over 55 community leaders including Arizona attorneys, judges, Arizona State Legislators, state Supreme Court justices, and those in the academic field will serve on judging panels.

"The textbook is brilliantly written at a level easily understandable for high school students, this program should be mandatory for any citizen involved in our legal and political systems!" comments Judge Nicole Laurin, a City of Gilbert Municipal Judge and one of the judges at this year's "We the People" competition.

"We the People makes me realize that the future of America is in OUR hands and we need to take responsibility and learn about OUR government," states one of the competing students.

In 2002, Mesa's Dobson High School team won first place at the National We the People competition. This year, ten teams will compete for the chance to bring home another national title to Arizona:

- Dobson (Mesa)
- Hamilton (Chandler)
- Marcos de Niza (Tempe)
- Corona del Sol (Tempe)
- Mountain Ridge (Glendale - 2 teams)
- Prescott High
- Nogales High
- Desert View (Tucson)
- Lake Havasu High School

' We are very excited about the quality of students at this year's competition," said Susan Nusall, state program coordinator. "But only one team will go to Washington D.C. in May 2004 to represent Arizona in the National Competition."

"We the People" is sponsored by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education and supported with funding by the Arizona Supreme Court and the Center for Civic Education. Over the last seventeen years, the Foundation has trained several hundred Arizona teachers and distributed thousands of free sets of We the People textbooks to Arizona classrooms. As a result, more than 25,000 students have learned about the US Constitution and Bill of Rights through this innovative, active-learning curriculum.

For more information about "We The People...The Citizen & The Constitution", please visit <http://www.azflse.org> or contact Susan Nusall, state program coordinator at 602-340-7361.

About the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education

The Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education was created over twenty years ago to support legal aid for the indigent throughout the state and to support democracy education in primary and secondary schools. In 2003, the Foundation disbursed over \$2 million in funding to support legal aid agencies throughout the state. The Foundation also conducts comprehensive K- 12 education programs, teaching youth about conflict resolution, peace making, public policy making, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. In 2003, the Foundation reached thousands of Arizona school children with this curriculum.