

"We the People" State Competition Set for January 10th

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PHOENIX, Ariz. (January 7, 2003) - The Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education is pleased to announce that eight of Arizona's top high school civics and government classrooms will compete for a chance to defend Arizona's national title at the **16th annual "We The People...The Citizen and The Constitution" State Competition on Friday, January 10th 2003.** 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). Supreme Court Vice Chief Justice Ruth McGregor will deliver the keynote address at an Awards Ceremony at 5:00 p.m. to honor the students and teachers.

"We the People is an innovative way of teaching kids the importance of active, engaged citizenship not through exclusive use of a textbook, but rather by making students defend their knowledge of U.S. Constitutional history and principles to a panel of community leaders," says Cindy Zwick, the executive director of the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education. "The We the People State Competition lets Arizona youth showcase their knowledge of important Constitutional concepts while at the same time providing members of the community with an opportunity to actively nurture citizenship and character in our youth."

Over 50 community leaders including Arizona attorneys, Arizona State Legislators, U.S. Congressmen, state Supreme Court justices, and those in the academic field have been invited to serve on panels to challenge students' knowledge of Constitutional principles in a process similar to legislative or congressional hearings.

"What is so exciting...is that this program moves past the rhetoric of reverence for the constitution and allows the students to get into the study and foundation of our constitutional republic," commented J. D. Hayworth, U. S. Congressman and one of the judges at last year's We the People Competition. "It teaches you about your government and what you stand for as an American," stated one of the students.

Last year, Mesa's Dobson High School team won first place at the National We the People competition. This year, Dobson along with Hamilton (Chandler); Rio Rico (Southern Arizona); Mt. Ridge (Glendale); Prescott High; Willcox High and Globe High will compete for a chance to defend Arizona's national title.

"We are very excited about the quality of teams competing in this year's competition," said Susan Nusall, state program coordinator. "But only one team will go to Washington D.C. in April 2003 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 sixteen 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 22,500 students have learned about the US Constitution and Bill of Rights through this innovative, active-learning curriculum.

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 2002, the Foundation will disburse over \$2 million in funding to support 25 legal aid agencies throughout the state. The Foundation also funds comprehensive K-12 education programs, teaches youth about conflict resolution, peace making, public policy making, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. In 2002, the Foundation will reach 40,000 Arizona school children with this curriculum.

For more information about “We The People...The Citizen & The Constitution”, please contact Susan Nusall, state program coordinator at 602-340-7361 or via email at susan.nusall@azflse.org.