

ARIZONA STUDENTS IN NATIONAL COMPETITION ON U.S. CONSTITUTION

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(WASHINGTON, DC) - On April 28, students from Dobson High School in Mesa will represent Arizona in Washington, DC at the **We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution National Finals**. More than 1,200 high school students from all fifty states and the District of Columbia will participate in this highly prestigious academic competition that tests students' knowledge of the U.S. Constitution. Dobson won the opportunity to represent Arizona through a statewide competition of 16 schools sponsored by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education. Dobson has won the state title each year since 2002.

Dobson High School students have studied for months preparing for their role as experts in a simulated congressional hearing testifying on the history and present-day application of the US Constitution. "This year's team has worked incredibly hard. The depth of knowledge they possess about the Constitution is amazing. We are excited about the National Competition," said Shannon Sweat, the teacher who led her class to the championship.

The first round of the national finals will be held at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia, on April 28 and 29. Now in its twentieth year, the competition challenges high school civics and government classes with making presentations and answering constitutional questions before a panel of judges who are national experts from across the country. These experts include constitutional scholars, lawyers, and government leaders who act as congressional committee members while evaluating student responses. Scores from the first two days of hearings determine the top ten classes that move on to compete in the elite championship round April 30 in House hearing rooms on Capitol Hill. That evening, the winning classes will receive awards during a special ceremony at the Omni Shoreham in Washington D.C.

The national, state and local competitions are important culminating activities of **We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution**, the most extensive civic education program of its kind in the country. The **We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution** textbook, developed by the Center for Civic Education, is distributed in Arizona at no cost to Arizona teachers who attend professional development trainings conducted by the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education. The Foundation reaches over XX teachers annually with free We the People training and textbooks.

Students representing Dobson High School are: Quinney Fu, Elizabeth Meyers, Henry Jiang, Jennifer Truong, Cady Pisani, Laurel Jones, Amanda Toohey, Cheseree Gaston, Caree Wheeler, John Lorenzen, Lauren Hanson, Arielle King, Sarah Raynes, and Blake Blackman.

ALERT: A photo of the class will be available on the Center for Civic Education web site at www.civiced.org/natlfinals/teams.html after 8:00 p.m. EDT on Saturday, April 28, and photos of the top ten classes will be provided on Monday, April 30 after 11:00 p.m. EDT.

About Arizona's "We the People" Program Over the last twenty years, the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education has trained several hundred Arizona teachers and distributed thousands of free sets of "We the People" textbooks to Arizona classrooms. As a result, thousands of Arizona students have learned about the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights through this innovative, active-learning curriculum.

Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education

The Program encourages active learning in and out of the classroom about contemporary constitutional issues, the history of democratic philosophy and the history surrounding the creation of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. "We the People" also meets Arizona Academic Standards in Civics and Government and Language Arts. Each "We the People" team competing consists of a regularly-rostered class of juniors or seniors who are studying civics and government or history.

About the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services and Education

The Foundation provides technical and financial assistance to legal aid organizations, schools and community groups working toward "access to justice for all Arizonans" through law-related education and free legal services and by promoting statewide collaborative efforts.

Helpful Websites:

- Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education: <http://www.azflse.org>
- Center for Civic Education: <http://www.civiced.org>
- Arizona We the People Program: <http://www.azflse.org/WeThePeople>