



## ***We the People... The Citizen and the Constitution*** **Guidelines for Judges**

### ***Structure of the Hearings***

During simulated congressional hearings on the Constitution and Bill of Rights, high school students will appear before “congressional committees” consisting of three judges from the community. As members of a committee, judges will hear oral presentations from groups of students on selected constitutional issues. Students should be treated as experts who have been asked to testify before the congressional committee on their particular topic.

The chair of the committee will conduct the proceedings. The chair may be one of the judges or someone in addition to the three judges, such as a member of Congress, the district coordinator, or a prominent community member. Judges are encouraged to play the role of a congressional committee member as much as possible. Certain procedures, such as formally addressing the students (as in “the chair recognizes the group from Jefferson High”), will add to the sense of authenticity.

Each competing class will bring six groups to the hearings, one group for each of the six units in the textbook, *We the People... The Citizen and the Constitution*. Each group has been given three questions on its topic to prepare in advance. The group will not know which of the three questions it will be required to answer until the question is asked by the judges.

The students will respond to their group’s question with a four-minute prepared presentation during which they may use notes. They will then respond for six minutes to follow-up questions by the judges. Each of the six class groups will thus appear before the judges for a total of ten minutes.

The judges will listen to each group’s presentation, question the group on its topic, and score each group. The class’s total score will consist of the combined scores received by its six groups. The class with the highest total score will be declared the winner and will advance to the next level of hearings.

### ***Hearing Questions***

As mentioned above, the panel of three judges will select one of three questions to ask each student group. These questions have been provided to teachers in advance of the hearing by the Center for Civic Education.

After hearing a group’s prepared presentation, judges will ask the students follow-up questions during a six-minute period. These follow-up questions constitute the judge’s most challenging task. The Center for Civic Education will provide suggested follow-up questions which coordinators will give to judges, and judges are encouraged to use these questions whenever appropriate. However, it is essential that judges focus much of their

questioning on what students said in their four-minute presentation, keeping in mind the scoring criteria described below.

Judges should phrase follow-up questions concisely. It is best not to ask multi-part follow-up questions. If a multi-part question is used, the question should be asked one part at a time, allowing the students to respond before proceeding to the next part. During the final minute (indicated by a signal from the official timer), questions should either be brief summary questions or requests for concluding remarks.

### ***Timing***

For each hearing, there will be an official timer, who should not be one of the judges. The timer should keep strictly to the framework of ten minutes per team: four minutes for the initial oral presentation and six minutes for the follow-up questioning. Timers will silently notify groups by holding up a card when they have one minute left in their initial oral presentation time and will silently notify judges when there is one minute left in the follow-up question period. When time has expired, the timer will stop all participants by saying “Time!”

Every effort should be made to observe the time limits. However, at the discretion of the judges, extra time may be allowed a group to compensate for any situation that significantly reduces the time allowed for response to questions. For example, if a judge has taken an inordinate amount of time to phrase a question, extra time may be granted to the student for his or her response.

Judges will award up to 100 tiebreaker points to each group for its overall performance. Their points will be used only in the event two or more classes achieve the same final score. The tiebreaker points are based on the judges’ overall evaluation of the group as follows:

Excellent	90 to 100 points
Very Good	80 to 89 points
Average	70 to 79 points
Below Average	0 to 69 points

### ***Conflicts and Protests***

In the event of a protest or conflict during the course of the hearing competition, final arbitration shall be the responsibility of the district coordinator or designee at the congressional district level, and by the state coordinator or designee at the state level, subject to the rules and regulations of the ***We the People...The Citizen and the Constitution*** program.