



Center for Civic Education

2010 We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution State Finals

“The people made the Constitution, and the people can unmake it. It is the creature of their own will, and lives only by their will.”



Students from across Florida presented expert testimony before panels of judges on topics such as rule of law, the Bill of Rights, and Citizenship in the 21st Century throughout the day.

Students from ten congressional districts in Florida brought the words of U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Marshall to life at the *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* State Finals Simulated Congressional Hearing in Orlando on January 8, 2010. ***We the People*** is our nation's top program educating youth about the meaning and value, historical and philosophical significance of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The ***We the People*** program is funded by the United States Department of Education and administered nationally by the Center for Civic Education in California. The program is coordinated throughout Florida by The Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. in elementary, middle, and high schools throughout the state.

The day began with Florida Bar President-Elect, Mayanne Downs talking to the students about the significance of the Constitution and the role it plays in their daily lives. She reminded the students of how significant the language of the Founding Fathers has been throughout history and present day times. She addressed issues surrounding freedom of speech and freedom of religion and reminded students who the Constitution protects you from.

Two hundred and fifteen high school students presented their knowledge of a given unit, dealing with topics like the significance of rule of law, natural rights philosophy, the creation of the Constitution, judicial review, federalism, the Bill of Rights, and challenges facing constitutional democracy in the twenty-first century in front of a panel of judges consisting of volunteer lawyers, congressional staff, school board members, and civic education advocates. The Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. utilizes hundreds of volunteers annually to serve as judges in its various academic competitions. This year, a wide range of judges, lawyers and other professionals donated their time to evaluate the students' presentations during the We the People



Attorney Noel Lawrence, Judge Doug Henderson, and Attorney Keshara Davis served as the judges for Unit 1.

At the conclusion of the hearings, the students were engaged in a Supreme Court case study conducted by FLREA Executive Director Annette Boyd Pitts, with assistance from FLREA board member Judge Doug Henderson, and Mr. Ken Hurley. Ten students became attorneys while examining the Supreme Court Case of *Scott v. Harris*, which addressed the question: "Does a police officer who stops a high-speed chase by ramming a fleeing suspect's car violate the Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable seizure?" Members of the audience were asked to vote with their feet and then justify their vote in an Oxford style debate. This activity once again brought the Constitution to life for the



Students testified to various issues embedded in the U.S. Constitution throughout the day.

Students waited in anticipation as the awards ceremony approached. The awards ceremony serves as the culminating activity for the day. Awards were presented to the top four teams overall, the top presentations for each unit, and the Stephen Shenkman Professionalism Award is given to the team who has exemplified the ideals of professionalism, as voted by the judges, throughout the day.



This year, first place overall was awarded to Our Lady of Lourdes Academy (Teacher Rosie Heffernan, Congressional District 18). Mrs. Heffernan and her students will have the honor of representing Florida at the We the People National Finals in Arlington, Virginia April 23-27, 2010. These students will compete against teams from across the United States.

Finishing in second place was Miami-Killian Senior High School (Teacher Lorraine Silverstein, District 21), followed by McArthur High School (Teacher Marsha Eckhardt, District 20), and Viera High School (Teacher Christopher Spinale, District 15). Ferguson High School, coached by Mr. Carlos Ardaya, was awarded the Stephen C. Shenkman Professionalism Award.

Other schools represented at the We the People State Finals were: Lofton High School, Teacher Laura Thomley, Congressional District 3; Marion Technical Institute, Teacher Doug Oswald, Congressional District 6; New Dimensions High School, Teacher Val Margarit, Congressional District 12, Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High, Teacher Connie Higgins, Congressional District 17, and Father Lopez Catholic High School, Teacher Patricia Everett, Congressional District 24. Christopher Spinale of Viera High School was selected as the Florida Scholarship Teacher selected to attend National Finals in



Mr. Doug Oswald of Marion Technical Institute accepts a teacher award presented by Attorney Noel Lawrence and FLREA Executive Director Annette Boyd Pitts. Each teacher was recognized for their excellence in promoting civic education through the **We the People** program.

For additional information about the **We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution** Program, please contact:



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