



EIGHTH CIRCUIT PUBLIC OUTREACH NEWSLETTER

4th Quarter - 2023

Welcome!

Welcome to the inaugural Eighth Circuit Public Outreach Newsletter. Helping people understand the work of the judicial branch, and increasing confidence in that work, is both important and rewarding. Most states have graduation and testing requirements covering the judicial branch. Educators need meaningful methods to teach their students and there is no better source than the judicial branch itself.

From naturalization ceremonies that welcome our newest citizens, career days and mock trials that allow students to see the inner workings of the courts, to specialized programs that engage all members of the public, the courts within the Eighth Circuit work hard to engage with the communities around them.

Thank you,

[Rachel Marshall](#)

Director of Civics Education, Eighth Circuit and Eastern District of Missouri

[Molly Rach](#)

Outreach Newsletter Editor and Library Assistant, Eighth Circuit



Magistrate Judge Alice Senechal administers the Oath of Allegiance at a naturalization ceremony held before a Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks game in Fargo, North Dakota. Image courtesy of the District of North Dakota.

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...and more!

Eastern District of Arkansas



Mock Trial National Championships Held in Historic Courtroom

In May 2023, the [National High School Mock Trial National Championships](#) were held in Little Rock, Arkansas, and this year's 47 teams from across the country were treated to a bit of legal history. Parts of the competition were held in the renovated Auxiliary Courtroom 436 and Civic Education Center in the Richard Sheppard Arnold United States Courthouse.

Auxiliary Courtroom 436 is where future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and Pine Bluff attorney Wiley Branton argued for the cause of desegregation in 1956 and 1957. Known as the "Little Rock Nine," the case *Aaron et al. v. Cooper et al.* came after 33 parents of Black students tried to register their children in white schools in January 1956. U.S. District Court Judge John E. Miller ruled the school board's plan of a phased integration over the span of six years to be "prompt and reasonable." The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed Miller's decision in April 1957.



District Court Judge Ronald Davies.
Image courtesy of the Eighth Circuit Library.

In August 1957, Pulaski County Chancery Court Judge Murray Reed issued a temporary restraining order blocking the school district from moving forward with integration. The ruling was overturned days later in the auxiliary courtroom when federal District Court Judge Ronald Davies, a visiting judge from North Dakota, blocked the state from further proceedings in the matter.

On September 2, 1957, the day before classes were to begin, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus announced he was ordering the National Guard to prevent integration of Little Rock Central High School, and on September 4th, nine Black students were turned away from the school. On September 20, 1957, Judge Davies granted an injunction against Faubus ruling that the governor had exceeded his authority in obstructing the school board's plan and ordered the integration to begin. On April 28, 1958, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Judge Davies' injunction against Faubus.

Once again, in June 1958, the Little Rock School Board tried to delay integration until 1961 and District Court Judge Harry J. Lemley granted the request. The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Judge Lemley's ruling in August 1958. Finally, on September 12, 1958, the United States Supreme Court affirmed the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals decisions unanimously, reinforcing to the states that the desegregation of schools was a constitutional imperative.

The renovation to create a [1957 era-faithful courtroom](#) is ongoing and will be complete when the 'Aaron Bench' is returned to Little Rock. The Judge's Bench is currently on display at the United States Supreme Court. ABC News also offered a historic glimpse into the desegregation fight and the National High School Mock Trial Championships in their article [Judge Who Defied Segregationists is Honored in Little Rock as Hero](#).



Auxiliary Courtroom 436 and Civic Education Center.
Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Arkansas.

Western District of Arkansas



Fort Smith City Schools Participate in Civics Outreach

The Western District of Arkansas hosted a group of 75 students from the Fort Smith City Schools. The students and school administrators visited the Judge Isaac C. Parker Courthouse on November 2, 2023.

Magistrate Judge Christy Comstock presided over a fictional scenario based on the case *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* An attorney volunteer from the Federal Public Defender's Office, along with an attorney volunteer with the United States Attorney's Office, assisted with the scenario. United States Probation and United States Marshals staff also participated.

The students were provided with a short courthouse tour before heading to the United States Marshals Museum where they had a pizza lunch and received additional civics education with court partners at the museum.



Students participating in a fictional scenario with Magistrate Judge Christy Comstock. Photo courtesy of the Western District of Arkansas.

To Catch a Grinch

A one-day camp called "To Catch a Grinch" was held on December 21, 2023, at the United States Marshals Museum in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Cassandra Burkard, on-site programs manager for the museum, with help from fellow museum staff members, the Fort Smith Police Department, and local judicial representatives, took children through the process of collecting evidence, apprehending a suspect, hearing a case in a mock court, and even how to secure an identity in witness protection.

In this case, the suspect was The Grinch and he was found guilty of stealing Christmas decorations and gifts.



Howard Vernon, age 9, sits with his client, The Grinch, while acting as defense attorney along with Western District of Arkansas Chief Deputy Clerk Heather Burns. Photo courtesy of Hank Layton. *River Valley Democrat-Gazette*. Used with Permission.

District of Minnesota



The Justice & Democracy Center of Minnesota

[The Justice & Democracy Center of Minnesota](#) continues to welcome students and adult learners each week. Visits are individually tailored and often include observing a court proceeding, meeting a judge and touring their chambers, meeting Deputy United States Marshals and their bomb dog, visiting the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals courtroom and learning about the appeals process, taking part in a hands-on court reporter demonstration, along with spending time in the interactive center itself.

For more on the Justice & Democracy Center of Minnesota, please see the [Special Outreach Feature](#) from the Eighth Circuit Library Newsletter.



A student visitor at the new Justice & Democracy Center of Minnesota. Photo courtesy of the District of Minnesota.

Northern District of Iowa



Northern District of Iowa Pro Se Law Clerk Mentors Mock Trial Students



Matt Winter

For the past eleven seasons, Northern District of Iowa Staff Attorney and Pro Se Law Clerk Matt Winter has coached and mentored the South Sioux City High School mock trial team. The teams from South Sioux City, Nebraska, located directly across the Missouri River from Sioux City, Iowa, compete in Nebraska's region six. This year's mock trial senior team were the regional champions and advanced to the state mock trial competition, winning two out of three rounds, only losing to the eventual state champion. This year's junior team were the regional runner-up.

Matt says he is most proud of how his teams have performed despite the relative lack of resources they have compared to other mock trial teams in the state. The South Sioux City teams compete at the highest levels and have been the regional runner-up or regional champion seven times since 2015. The team's successes are a testament to the hundreds of hours of work that the students put in each year.

Matt also keeps in close touch with a lot of the program's alumni. Many of his students have gone on to college, including many to prestigious colleges, and now many of them are entering graduate school. It is important that the lessons learned in mock trial—confidence in public speaking, dynamic thinking, and even legal principles—are skills that will continue to benefit the students as they navigate college and start their careers. Although he never encourages the kids to go to law school, because he doesn't want to foster the idea that mock trial is only for people in that career path, Matt still finds it gratifying when students do decide to pursue law.



Sioux City South Mock Trial Team at their final practice with Chief District Court Judge Leonard Strand before heading to state competition.

Photo courtesy of the South Sioux City Mock Trial Team's X account. Used with Permission.

The students receive a multitude of support from "members of the court family or close court associates." A number of Chief District Court Judge Leonard Strand's law clerks have been assistant coaches with Matt, including Law Clerk Audrey Felderman this year. The students have had the opportunity to learn and practice with a number of legal professionals from the Northern District of Iowa including: Chief Magistrate Judge Kelly K.E. Mahoney and her Career Law Clerk Paige Burnham, Federal Public Defender Brad Hansen, Assistant Federal Public Defender Brittany Hedstrom, Assistant United States Attorney Ron Timmons, Assistant United States Attorney Patrick Greenwood, and many more. Additionally, Chief Judge Leonard Strand and District Court Judge C.J. Williams have both been guest judges at practices for the students.

On top of the assistance the students receive for mock trial practices, the Court has also offered job shadowing opportunities and other educational opportunities, like being able to watch and follow important trials within the district.

Southern District of Iowa



Des Moines Area Community College Students Learn About Criminal Justice Careers

On November 1, 2023, the Southern District of Iowa hosted 33 Des Moines Area Community College students and their professor at the courthouse for a panel discussion about criminal justice careers. Chief District Court Judge Stephanie Rose, along with members from the Federal Public Defender's Office, the United States Marshals Service, the United States Attorney's Office, and the United States Probation Office participated in panel discussions with the students about their careers. This was the third year the district has hosted the event.

Western District of Missouri



High Aspirations Visits Courthouse

Members from High Aspirations during their tour of the courthouse. Photos courtesy of the Western District of Missouri.



On June 16, 2023, the youth group High Aspirations visited the Charles Evans Whittaker Courthouse for a tour. High Aspirations is a mentoring program serving the social, emotional, academic, and spiritual needs of African American males ages 8 to 18.

Constitution Day Event

In celebration of Constitution Day, United States District Court Judge Stephen R. Bough and Jackson County Circuit Court Associate Judge Janette K. Rodecap took time out of their day to engage with students from Belton High School, University Academy, and St. Teresa's Academy.



Students participating in the Constitution Day event. Photo courtesy of the Western District of Missouri's X account. Used with permission.

Eastern District of Missouri



Historic Thomas F. Eagleton Display Installation



Barbara Eagleton, wife of former Senator Thomas F. Eagleton, speaks at the display reception. Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Missouri.

A historical exhibit about Senator Thomas F. Eagleton and the courthouse named for him was installed in the Jury Assembly Room after several years of research and design. The exhibit features four sections: early life and career, time in the Senate, post-retirement activities, and history of the courthouse.

An opening reception was held on June 29, 2023. Speakers included Chief District Judge Stephen R. Clark, Senior District Court Judge Edward L. Filippine, Senior District Judge Rodney W. Sippel, and Mark Abels (former Eagleton press secretary). GSA Administrator Robin Carnahan gave the keynote. Members of the Eagleton family and colleagues and staff from around the country were in attendance at the dedication.

Scout Merit Badge Events Held in St. Louis and Cape Girardeau

Full-day summer workshops for Scouts earning the Citizenship in the Nation Merit Badge were held in St. Louis on July 6, 2023, and Cape Girardeau on August 16, 2023. This was the first badge program hosted in Cape Girardeau since 2019.

Participating Scouts toured the federal courthouse, and the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, and the Common Pleas Courthouse in Cape Girardeau. The Scouts observed courtroom proceedings, met judges, attorneys, and United States Marshals, and joined mini-classes on the Constitution. The Scouts in St. Louis met Senior District Court Judge Rodney W. Sippel and those in Cape Girardeau met with Senior District Court Judge Stephen N. Limbaugh and Magistrate Judge Abbie Crites-Leoni. A total of 38 Scouts earned their merit badge this summer.



Scouts visiting the St. Louis courthouse. Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Missouri.

Groundbreaking Civics Education Program Launched in St. Louis in 2023

“All speakers were incredible and gave unique insight to every aspect of the judicial system, ... hearing from Cathy Kuhlmeier was so immersive.” –Hometowns Student



Inaugural students of the first *Supreme Court and My Hometown* program with Cathy Kuhlmeier, one of the original plaintiffs in the case (left). Students work with one of the mentors during a breakout session (right). Photos courtesy of Supreme Court Historical Society's X page. Used with permission.

The *Supreme Court and My Hometown* program, a nationwide initiative that is a collaboration between the Supreme Court Historical Society and the United States Courts, engages high school students in an intensive study of the processes and substantive issues of cases decided by the Supreme Court of the United States in a unique and personalized way. A distinguishing feature of this program is that students focus on a Supreme Court case that originated in their hometown and local court.

The St. Louis program, the first offering of *Hometowns*, explored both the Constitutional questions as well as the procedural history of *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* (1988), a landmark student First Amendment case. The program was planned and coordinated by Nicole Maffei, Director of Civics Education for the Supreme Court Historical Society, and Rachel Marshall, Director of Civics Education for the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit and the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.

Twenty-two St. Louis area high school students from 12 schools in Missouri and Illinois were selected as the inaugural class of scholars. They gathered at the Thomas F. Eagleton United States Courthouse on July 25, 2023, to participate in a full-day orientation, which included an introduction to the federal courts, a visit to the Judicial Learning Center and the *Tinker v. Des Moines* exhibit, courtroom observation and debrief with Chief District Judge Stephen Clark, and a law school style session on the First Amendment by a law professor. Scholars also met their volunteer legal mentors, local attorneys, and members of the St. Louis Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.

Over the course of 10 after-school sessions during the fall semester, the students engaged in an immersive federal court program that took them on a journey through the *Hazelwood* case. The students were aided by the attorney mentors throughout their learning experience as well as by federal judges and court staff, law professors, and historical eyewitnesses, including named plaintiff Cathy Kuhlmeier.

A highlight of the program was the moot court activity. With the assistance of the mentors, the students prepared and presented arguments in the Eighth Circuit's En Banc Courtroom. Chief Magistrate Judge Shirley Padmore Mensah served as the Chief Justice of the moot court and expertly prepared and guided the student justices through the process of questioning and proposing hypothetical situations for consideration during oral argument. For homework, students listened to oral arguments and reviewed Justice Byron White's majority opinion.

The learning culminated in a capstone project—an installation in the Judicial Learning Center at the Thomas F. Eagleton Courthouse. Students worked in small teams to apply their learning and create one of five panels that will complement the existing *Tinker v. Des Moines* exhibit. Eighth Circuit Library Assistant Molly Rach taught the students about graphic design and helped create the exhibit format to ensure cohesion. Each student applied their learning and knowledge from the program to their panel. The legal mentors and Eighth Circuit Library staff provided feedback and helpful suggestions to the students throughout the development process. The students presented their designs during the closing celebration of the program. The official unveiling in the Judicial Learning Center will happen in March 2024.

District of Nebraska



Career Immersion Program

The District of Nebraska hosted a career immersion program allowing students to work with volunteers from the United States Probation Office, the United States Attorney's Office, and the Public Defender's Office. Participants prepared for an initial appearance, sentencing, and a violation of supervised release hearing, with District of Nebraska magistrate judges presiding over the hearings.

After the hearings, each student was assigned a set of facts for a person just getting out of prison and being on supervised release. Through this immersive experience, participants were walked through a re-entry simulation, going through what a person has to do to comply with the conditions of their supervised release. Examples of different conditions included applying for a job, but not having a license, or completing a type of class but having to go and apply for a voucher to pay for it. There were stations that were manned by probation officers and magistrate judges where the participants could go to get the things they needed to complete the various tasks. Probation officers also explored different career fields in the federal court with participants. Over thirty students participated during the two-day program.

District of South Dakota



Naturalization Ceremonies Held Throughout South Dakota

In 2023, the District of South Dakota helped 980 applicants complete the process of becoming United States Citizens at naturalization ceremonies held across the state in Rapid City, Pierre, and Sioux Falls. The largest ceremony held was in Sioux Falls on August 4, 2023, at the Washington Pavilion. Magistrate Judge Veronica L. Duffy presided over the ceremony and United States Congressman Dusty Johnson delivered the keynote address congratulating new citizens for their hard work. In Fort Pierre, Chief District Judge Roberto A. Lange presided over the ceremony and United States Senator Mike Rounds delivered the keynote address to 176 new citizens at the Parkview Gym.



New citizens take a selfie with Sioux Falls Mayor Paul Tenhaken at December 8, 2023, ceremony. Photo courtesy of District of South Dakota.

District of North Dakota



Sheyenne High School students with Magistrate Judge Alice Senechal (left) and Eight Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Ralph Erickson (right). Photos courtesy of the District of North Dakota.

Civics Education Event Held in Fargo

In May 2023, the United States District Court for the District of North Dakota held a civics education event at the district court in Fargo. Over thirty Sheyenne High School students learned about civil discourse and participated in a courtroom simulation jury trial, assuming the roles of attorneys and jurors. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Ralph R. Erickson and Magistrate Judge Alice R. Senechal presided over the courtroom simulations, and local attorneys acted as coaches.

8th Circuit Court of Appeals



Eighth Circuit Holds Arguments at Drake Law School

Drake University News & Events—The United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit heard oral arguments in the Daniel J. Power Courtroom at Drake University Law School on October 26, 2023, giving students, faculty, and members of the community a chance to see the court in action.

The Eighth Circuit provides appellate review of federal cases within its jurisdiction which includes Iowa and six other Midwest states. The panel of three judges, Judge James B. Loken of Minneapolis, Judge Jane Kelly, and Senior Judge Michael Melloy of Cedar Rapids heard three cases. [Learn more about the cases here.](#)

Legal Conference Held at Harding University

"The importance of civics is that it enlightens citizens as to the privilege and power of self-government, their liberties, and the steps they must take to preserve them."

—Chief Judge Lavenski Smith

On April 7, 2023, Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas, held a legal conference for students at Cone Chapel. Chief Judge Lavenski Smith delivered a speech in the morning on civics and its importance to the country. Sharing personal anecdotes, Chief Judge Smith highlighted the profound impact that civic awareness has on one's life.

In the afternoon, Eastern District of Arkansas Judge Lee Rudofsky and Eastern District of Texas Judge Jeremy Kernodle were interviewed by Andrew Thompson about their paths to the judiciary, as well as their current view from the bench.



Chief Judge Lavenski Smith addresses students (left). Senior Andrew Thompson interviews Judge Jeremy Kernodle, Eastern District of Texas, and Judge Lee Rudofsky, Eastern District of Arkansas (right). Pictures provided by Dr. Jon Wood. Used with permission.

2023 Bill of Rights Day Contest

Federal courts around the country recognize December 15th as Bill of Rights Day, celebrating the day that the Constitution's first ten Amendments were ratified in 1791.

In fall of 2023, district courts within the Seventh and Eighth Circuits collaborated to host the fourth annual student contest and event focusing on the Bill of Rights. Students in grades 5-12 were encouraged to submit essays and art projects proposing a new amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Nearly 700 students participated, submitting nearly 600 entries. Judges selected 32 finalists to advance to the grand prize round, and a total of nine winners were chosen from among the finalists.

A live educational webinar was hosted on the evening of December 6, 2023. All participating students and their families and teachers were invited to attend, along with interested members of the public. During the webinar, three federal judges spoke about their work and its relation to the Bill of Rights, and then took questions from the audience. The webinar ended with the announcement of contest winners.

The panel of judges participating in the webinar included United States Circuit Judge Diane P. Wood from the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, United States District Judge Katherine M. Menendez from the District of Minnesota, and United States Magistrate Judge Kellie M. Barr from the Southern District of Indiana. Judge Menendez acted as moderator for the event.

Over 200 people tuned in for the webinar, including at least two classroom watch parties. Additionally, two names were drawn from among participating teachers to win a class pizza party. The winners were Ms. Rund of Indiana and Mr. Waite of Missouri.

To see their winning entries and the entire list of finalists, visit: <https://judiciallearningcenter.org/bill-of-rights-day/>

STUDENT WINNERS

FIRST PLACE

High School Essay:

Leah Steup, Indiana

High School Art:

Davenie Beaton, Indiana

Middle School Essay:

Oliver Blackwell, Wisconsin

Middle School Art:

Charlotte Frank, Wisconsin

SECOND PLACE

High School Essay:

Neerja Ahuja, Wisconsin

High School Art:

Lillian van Hoornbeek, Missouri

Middle School Essay:

Frank Lis, Illinois

Middle School Art:

Sophia Eckman, Wisconsin

THIRD PLACE

Middle School Essay:

Scarlett Haughey, Missouri

Naturalization Highlights from Across the Eighth Circuit



In August 2023, a Naturalization ceremony was held before a Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks' game with Magistrate Judge Senechal presiding. The Clerk's Office Deputy-in-Charge, Todd Dudgeon, sang the national anthem.



On November 3, 2023, Chief District Court Judge Roberto A. Lange presided over a Naturalization ceremony in Pierre, South Dakota.

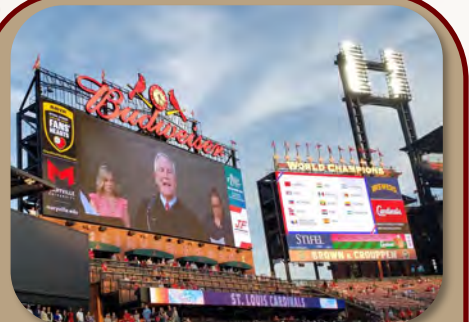
United States Senator Mike Rounds delivered the keynote address to 176 new citizens at the Parkview Gym.



On October 13, 2023, Magistrate Judge William P. Kelly presided over a Naturalization ceremony at Living History Farms in Urbandale, Iowa.



On September 13, 2023, 87 new Americans from 40 different countries were sworn in at Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri, with Magistrate Judge Jill A. Morris presiding.



On September 19, 2023, Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Duane Benton presided over a Naturalization ceremony at Busch Stadium in St. Louis, Missouri.

2023: By the Numbers

37

NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES
WELCOMING

2,500

NEW CITIZENS IN THE WESTERN
DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

10

NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES
WELCOMING OVER

600

NEW CITIZENS IN THE DISTRICT
OF NORTH DAKOTA

16

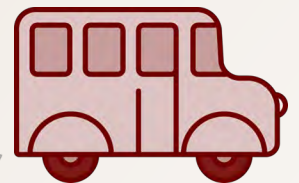
NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES
WELCOMING

499

NEW CITIZENS IN THE
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF IOWA

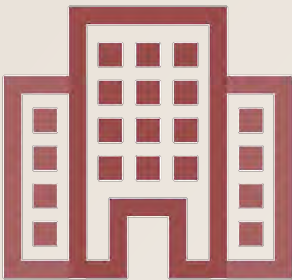
300

MILES TRAVELED BY MCDONALD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL TO THE
THOMAS F. EAGLETON COURTHOUSE IN ST. LOUIS FOR A TOUR



1,700

NUMBER OF SQUARE
FEET IN NEW
JUSTICE & DEMOCRACY
CENTER IN ST. PAUL



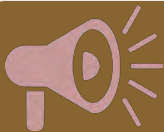
THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA WELCOMED

202

NEW CITIZENS ON AUGUST 4, 2023, AT THE WASHINGTON
PAVILION IN SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI WELCOMED 3,951 VISITORS FOR 146 TOURS

THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI WELCOMED 1,065 VISITORS FOR 26 TOURS



DID YOU HEAR ABOUT?

- DISTRICT OF NEBRASKA CHIEF DISTRICT COURT JUDGE ROBERT F. ROSSITER PARTICIPATED IN JOINT OATH CEREMONIES WITH THE NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT FOR NEW BAR ADMITTEES
- DISTRICT OF NORTH DAKOTA CHIEF DISTRICT COURT JUDGE PETER WELTE THREW OUT THE CEREMONIAL FIRST PITCH AT A FARGO-MOORHEAD REDHAWKS GAME AFTER A NATURALIZATION CEREMONY WAS HELD PRIOR TO THE GAME STARTING
- THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF IOWA HELD A NATURALIZATION CEREMONY ON JULY 4, 2023, AT AN IOWA CUBS GAME WITH DISTRICT COURT JUDGE STEPHEN LOCHER PRESIDING
- THE DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA HELD ITS FIRST-EVER SUMMER TEACHER INSTITUTE, FOCUSING ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF *GIDEON V. WAINWRIGHT*