



EIGHTH CIRCUIT PUBLIC OUTREACH NEWSLETTER

1st Quarter - 2025

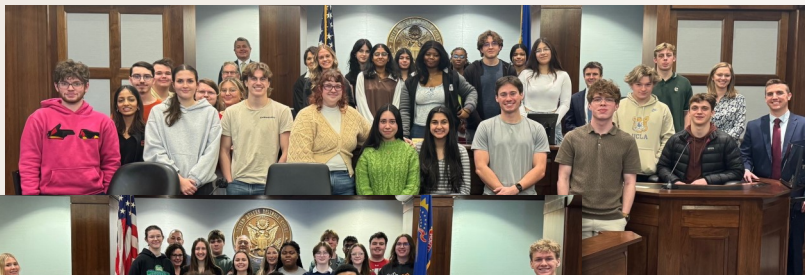
District of North Dakota Civics Activities

In March, the District of North Dakota hosted two outreach events. Magistrate Judge Clare R. Hochhalter, Assistant U.S. Attorney Jonathan O'Konek, Assistant Federal Public Defender Erin Bolinger, and U.S. Probation Officer Megan Scherf traveled to Minot, North Dakota, to lead students at Our Redeemer's Christian School in a Bill of Rights program. They used materials designed around the Administrative Office's Bill of Rights Day program.

Chief District Judge Peter D. Welte and Magistrate Judge Alice R. Senechal welcomed over 40 students from Sheyenne High School in West Fargo, North Dakota, for the Administrative Office's Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions program. This was the third year Sheyenne High School students have participated in the program at the Fargo courthouse. Judicial law clerks and attorneys recruited by the Federal Practice Committee assisted in presenting the program. Students were also able to tour the U.S. Marshals Service offices.



Students from Our Redeemer's Christian School with District of North Dakota court staff (left).



Students from Sheyenne High School with District of North Dakota court staff (top and left).

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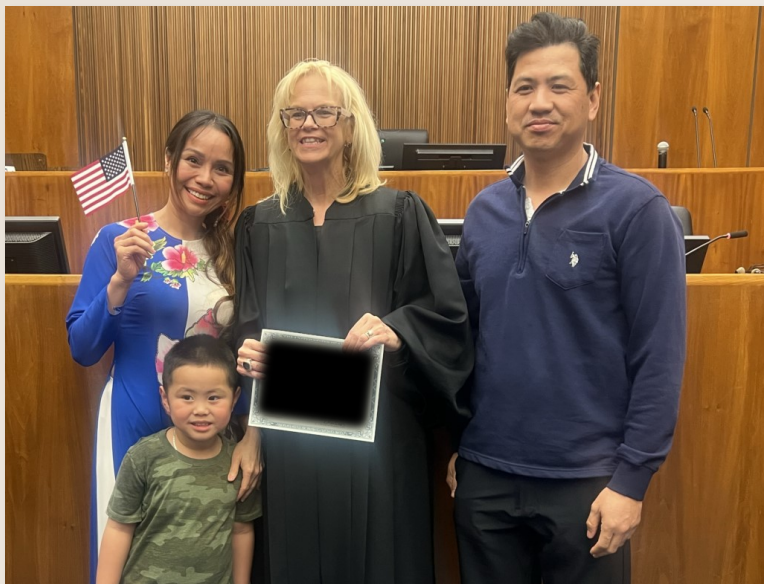
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...and more!

Courthouse Visits in the Northern District of Iowa

The Northern District of Iowa hosted five courthouse visits with a total of about 85 visitors. At the Cedar Rapids courthouse, a Marion High School government class observed a sentencing hearing and then had a question and answer session with U.S. District Judge Leonard Strand. Cornell College Pre-Law Honors club also observed a sentencing hearing and then had a question and answer session with Chief U.S. District Judge C.J. Williams. Additional groups to visit the courthouse were the Marion Venture Club and the Marion Homeschool Assistance Program. Finally, the Sioux City courthouse hosted a class from Sioux City High School.

Naturalization Held in Lincoln, Nebraska



Thuy Ngoc Ho and her family with District Judge Susan Bazis at the ceremony. Image courtesy of the Lincoln & Lancaster County Welcoming Plan. Used with Permission.

We need your talents, hard work, and participation in our country...for the benefit of your children and your grandchildren, as well as your own benefit. I hope that you preserve your native language, heritage, and culture. Doing so enriches not only the lives of those in your family - doing so also enriches America and all of us living here.

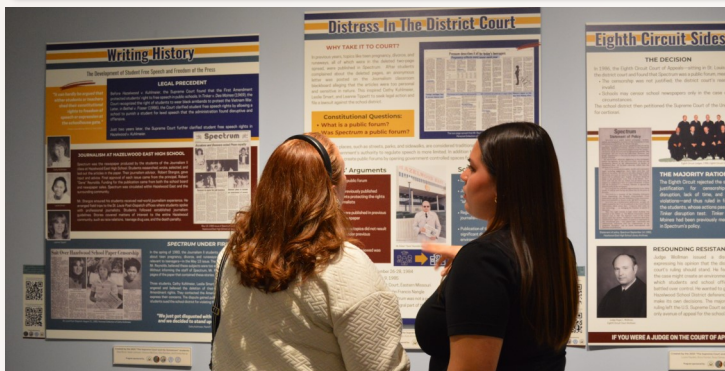
-District Judge Susan M. Bazis

The District of Nebraska held a Naturalization ceremony on March 7, 2025, at Lincoln's Robert V. Denney Federal Building, with U.S. District Judge Susan Bazis presiding. Forty new U.S. citizens were welcomed during the ceremony.

Closing Reception of Supreme Court and My Hometown Held in St. Louis

On February 26, 2025, a closing reception was held for the 2024 cohort of the [Supreme Court and My Hometown-St. Louis](#), at which the student capstone project was unveiled. For the project, the students conducted oral history interviews with first person participants and other legal experts to enhance the *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* exhibit created by the 2023 cohort.

The exhibit is displayed in the Judicial Learning Center in the Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse in St. Louis. The interviews are available by QR code and via the touch screen in the Learning Center. An online version of the exhibit with links to the interviews can be found [here](#). The event was attended by students from both cohorts, their families and teachers, as well as their attorney mentors and representatives from the Courts. Speakers at the event included Chief U.S. District Judge Stephen R. Clark, Eastern District of Missouri, and two attorney mentors.



Images courtesy of Molly Rach, U.S. Courts Library-8th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Installation of Mini-United Nations Officers



Image courtesy of the Eastern District of Arkansas.

On January 28, 2025, U.S. Magistrate Judge Benecia B. Moore presided over the installation of Mini-United Nations Officers at Gibbs Magnet School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Judge Moore administered the Oath to the Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General, and Mini-UN Ambassadors.

Street Law Class Visits Sioux Falls Courthouse



Image courtesy of the District of South Dakota.

Students from Brandon Valley High School's Street Law class visited the Sioux Falls, South Dakota, courthouse on March 31, 2025. The students were able to observe a sentencing hearing and then spent time with Chief U.S. District Judge Roberto Lange, U.S. Attorneys, and other court staff for a question and answer session.

Education Staff Represented at Educator Conferences

Education staff of the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Eastern District of Missouri hosted an exhibitor booth at the Missouri Council for Social Studies annual conference on February 21st and 22nd. On March 20th-22nd, they also hosted a booth at the National Council for History Education annual conference.

Educator conferences offer the opportunity to interact with hundreds of teachers. The court was able to share resources for teaching about the judicial branch and encouraging teachers to bring students to the courthouse for future events and field trips.



Image courtesy of the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Eastern District of Missouri.

College Moot Court Competition Held

On March 7, 2025, the University of Iowa College of Law hosted the Van Oosterhout-Baskerville Moot Court Competition. Participation in the competition is restricted to the top 32 appellate advocates in the second-year class. The top four competitors argued in a final round before a panel of four judges, including Chief U.S. District Judge Stephanie Rose, Southern District of Iowa.

State Mock Trial Competition Held in Little Rock

In March 2025, the Eastern District of Arkansas hosted the State High School Mock Trial Competition at the Richard Sheppard Arnold U.S. Courthouse in Little Rock, Arkansas. Seventeen teams from eleven high schools in Arkansas competed during the two day event. A total of 42 judges and staff members from the U.S. District Court, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Clerk's Office, and the U.S. Probation Office volunteered their time to support the event.

U.S. District Judge James M. Moody, Jr. presided over the championship round. The team from Har-Ber High School in Springdale, Arkansas, won the competition. They will go on in May to represent Arkansas at the National High School Mock Trial Competition in Phoenix, Arizona.



Images courtesy of the Eastern District of Arkansas.

Mock Trials Held in Fort Smith



Image courtesy of the Western District of Arkansas.

On January 21, 2025, Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Christy Comstock, U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Ford, and U.S. Magistrate Judge Bary Bryant held simultaneous mock trials for 65 AP students from Northside High School in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Street Law Teacher Workshop

For over ten years, the federal courts in St. Louis have worked with the Missouri Bar Association to co-host a 2-day professional development workshop for high school teachers, led by instructors from Street Law, Inc. Street Law specializes in effective teaching strategies for civic and law-related education.

On March 6th and 7th, thirty teachers from Missouri and Illinois participated in the 2025 event. The workshop included a courtroom observation and a session on the Fourth Amendment from U.S. Magistrate Judge John M. Bodenhausen, Eastern District of Missouri, and culminated in a moot court activity in the Eighth Circuit's En Banc Courtroom.



Image courtesy of the Eastern District of Missouri.

Naturalization Ceremony Held in Fargo



Image courtesy of the District of North Dakota.

Two separate Naturalization ceremony were held on March 25, 2025, at the Sanctuary Events Center in Fargo, North Dakota. U.S. Magistrate Judge Alice R. Senechal presided over the first ceremony and U.S. Bankruptcy Chief Judge Shon Hastings presided over the second ceremony. In total, between the two ceremonies, 200 new citizens were welcomed.

Naturalization Ceremony Held at Iowa Wolves Game



Image courtesy of the Southern District of Iowa.

A Naturalization ceremony was held at an Iowa Wolves basketball game in January 2025. U.S. Magistrate Judge Helen C. Adams, Southern District of Iowa, presided over the ceremony that welcomed 16 new citizens.

Robes in Schools Event

On January 17, 2025, as part of the Robes in Schools event, Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Christy Comstock, along with Judge Shannon Blatt (12th Judicial Circuit-Sebastian County), Judge Michael Wagoner (Sebastian County District Court-Greenwood District), and Judge Sam Terry (Sebastian County District Court-Fort Smith District) spoke to approximately 420 students at Ramsey Middle School in Fort Smith, Arkansas. They spoke about the Bill of Rights and more specifically, the ban on TikTok and what amendment(s) would relate to the ban.



Image courtesy of the Western District of Arkansas.

Two Classes Visit Omaha Courthouse

On February 24th and 26th, U.S. District Judge Brian Buescher provided tours for 25 business law class students from Marian High School and 35 students from Creighton Preparatory School's Introduction to Law class. Additionally, students met with the U.S. Probation Office and the U.S. Marshals Service. Students were also able to spend about an hour with Judge Buescher's courtroom learning about the federal courts.