



EIGHTH CIRCUIT PUBLIC OUTREACH NEWSLETTER

1st Quarter - 2026

Western District of Missouri



Read Across America

March is celebrated as National Reading Month, kicked off by Read Across America Day on March 2 - Dr. Suess' birthday - to promote literacy for children across the nation. Chief U.S. District Judge Brian C. Wimes and U.S. Magistrate Judge Jill A. Morris read to children at local elementary schools to celebrate the importance of reading. In addition, the U.S. District Court held a book drive and was able to donate over 100 books to local elementary schools.



Chief U.S. District Judge Brian C. Wimes and U.S. Magistrate Judge Jill A. Morris reading to children at local elementary schools. Photos courtesy of the Western District of Missouri.

Courthouse Visits



Photo courtesy of the Western District of Missouri.

Members of the Central Missouri Chapter of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) visited the Christopher S. Bond U.S. Courthouse in Jefferson City and spoke with Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Willie J. Epps, Jr. and others.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Read Across America
- Missouri Council for the Social Studies
- Street Law Teacher Workshop
- Courthouse Visits From Around the Eighth Circuit
- Civic Learning Week in the Eastern District of Missouri and the Eighth Circuit
- School Mock Trial Activities
- Naturalization Highlights From Around the Eighth Circuit

...and more!

Western and Eastern Districts of Missouri

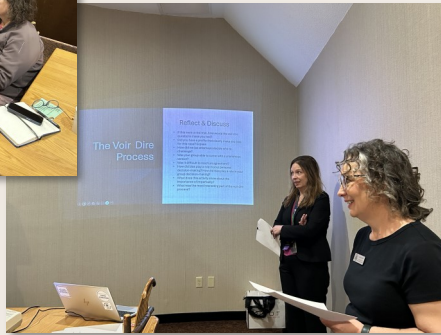


Missouri Council for the Social Studies

In February, the Western and Eastern Districts of Missouri and the Judicial Learning Center participated in the annual conference of the Missouri Council for the Social Studies (MCSS). Court staff hosted an exhibitor booth to connect with Missouri teachers and share resources and opportunities and also presented a workshop session during which teachers participated in a simulated voir dire and juror deliberation activity. Teachers left with a copy of the activity and a collection of grade-level resources to teach about the American jury system.



Photos courtesy of the Western District of Missouri.



Street Law Teacher Workshop



Photo courtesy of the Western District of Missouri.

On February 24-25, teachers from across the state participated in a two-day professional development workshop, presented by Street Law, Inc. and co-hosted by the Western and Eastern Districts of Missouri, The Missouri Bar, and the Judicial Learning Center. The event took place at the Christopher S. Bond U.S. Courthouse in Jefferson City. The program featured both federal and Missouri judges and attorneys, who discussed rights of the accused, and fair and effective Courts. Participants received classroom-ready materials, explored current and contested cases, learned from prominent members of the legal community, and participated in skill building strategies like case studies and a moot court.

Courthouse Visits

Students from Pierce City High School visited the Charles Evans Whittaker U.S. Courthouse in Kansas City.



Photo courtesy of the Western District of Missouri.



Photos courtesy of the Western District of Missouri.

Eighth Circuit and Eastern District of Missouri



Civic Learning Week

Civic Learning Week is a national celebration highlighting the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions that provide the foundation for an informed and engaged populace, sustaining and strengthening constitutional democracy in the United States. In partnership with the U.S. Courts in St. Louis, the Judicial Learning Center, Inc. welcomed student groups to the Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse for a week-long celebration, March 9-13. Daily courtroom activities were supported by local attorneys from the Judicial Learning Center's Board of Directors. Participating schools included: Francis Howell High School, Margaret Buerkle Middle School, and the History Club from Hannibal High School.



Photos courtesy of the Eastern District of Missouri.

District of Nebraska



Central High School's Political Science Pathway Visits the Courthouse

On February 25, students from Central High School's Political Science Pathway visited the courthouse and met with Senior U.S. District Judge Joseph F. Bataillon and others. Students had the opportunity to ask questions and try on U.S. Marshal tactical gear.



Photos courtesy of the District of Nebraska.

Eastern District of Arkansas



High School Mock Trials

In January, the Arkansas Mock Trial Committee hosted a Mock Trial Workshop for more than 100 high school students at the University of Arkansas Bowen School of Law in Little Rock. Chief U.S. District Court Judge Kristine G. Baker and U.S. District Judge D.P. Marshall, Jr. participated as the keynote speakers during a lunch presentation on civility and professionalism.

Photo courtesy of the Arkansas Mock Trial Committee.



Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Arkansas.

On February 27-28, the Richard Sheppard Arnold U.S. Courthouse in Little Rock hosted the Arkansas State High School Mock Trial Contest for 21 teams from 14 high schools across the state. The competition included four preliminary rounds over two days and was supported by volunteers from the Court. U.S. District Judge Brian S. Miller presided over the championship round.

Courthouse Visits

On March 20, students from the New York University Law School, Southern Justice Advocates group, visited the Richard Sheppard Arnold U.S. Courthouse in Little Rock. The group met with Chief Judge Baker and visited Judge Billy Roy Wilson's former courtroom and the 1957 Era-Faithful Courtroom.

On March 25, Chief Judge Baker hosted middle school students from the Clinton Presidential Library's Spring into Action! Camp at the Arnold Courthouse.



Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Arkansas.



Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Arkansas.

District of Minnesota



40th Annual Minnesota State High School Mock Trial Championship

On March 5-6, the Court hosted the 40th Annual Minnesota State High School Mock Trial Championship at the Warren E. Burger Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse. Teams from across the state joined, led by the Minnesota State Bar Association and U.S. Bankruptcy Judge William Fisher. U.S. District Judge Laura M. Provinzino judged the championship round.



Photos courtesy of the District of Minnesota.

District of North Dakota



Courthouse Visits

- Students from a Business Law course at Shanley High School met with Chief U.S. District Judge Peter D. Welte during a visit to the Quentin N. Burdick U.S. Courthouse in Fargo.
- MaryBeth Hegstad, Bankruptcy Judge Shon Hastings' career law clerk, spoke to a Business Law class at the University of Jamestown about the bankruptcy court.
- A group of eighth grade homeschool students visited the Burdick Courthouse and observed proceedings to assist in their preparation for a mock trial program.

District of South Dakota



Mock Trial Activities at the U.S. Courthouse in Sioux Falls

Chief U.S. District Judge Roberto Lange created a courtroom activity for use with students. The activity is a mock trial script about a school dress code policy and includes exhibits and roles for student participants. With the support of law clerks, Chief Judge Lange and Senior U.S. District Judge Karen E. Schreier hosted two student groups at the U.S. Courthouse in Sioux Falls. Sioux Falls Christian School participated in February and Summit High School participated in March.

Sioux Falls Christian School produced an informative video about their experience: <https://vimeo.com/1172169078?ft=pl&fe=vl>



Sioux Falls Christian School Mock Trial at the U.S. Courthouse in Sioux Falls. Photos courtesy of the District of South Dakota.



Summit High School Mock Trial at the U.S. Courthouse in Sioux Falls. Photos courtesy of the District of South Dakota.

Naturalization Highlights from Across the Eighth Circuit

Date: March 2

Location: Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln

Judge: Senior U.S. District Judge Joseph F. Bataillon

The ceremony was part of a celebration of Nebraska's Statehood Day.

Date: March 17

Location: Sanctuary Events Center in Fargo

Judges: U.S. Magistrate Judge Alice R. Senechal presided over the first ceremony, and Chief U.S. District Judge Peter D. Welte presided over the second.

186 people from 43 countries became citizens during the two ceremonies. North Dakota First Lady Kjersti Armstrong, a naturalized citizen, gave remarks at both ceremonies.



Photo courtesy of the District of North Dakota.

Date: March 20

Location: National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids

Judge: U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark A. Roberts

Phillip Clouse, controller at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, gave opening remarks.



Photo courtesy of the National Czech & Slovak Museum and Library.

Date: February 6

Location: Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines

Judge: U.S. Magistrate Judge William P. Kelly

The event was part of a year-long celebration for America's 250th birthday.



Photo courtesy of the Southern District of Iowa.

Date: March 13

Location: Bentonville Public Library in Bentonville

Judge: U. S. Magistrate Judge Christy D. Comstock

Bentonville Mayor Stephanie Orman participated in the ceremony.



Photo courtesy of the Western District of Arkansas.

Date: March 12

Location: Richard Sheppard Arnold U.S. Courthouse in Little Rock

Judge: U. S. Magistrate Judge Benecia B. Moore

Students from Forest Heights STEM Academy participated in the ceremony by handing out American flags to new citizens and leading the Pledge of Allegiance.



Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Arkansas.