



EIGHTH CIRCUIT PUBLIC OUTREACH NEWSLETTER

2nd Quarter - 2025

Western District of Arkansas Hosts 1st Annual Civics Appreciation Luncheon

On May 30, 2025, the Western District of Arkansas held their first Civics Appreciation Luncheon. The luncheon included federal judges, state judges, U.S. Attorneys, state attorneys, federal public defenders, and volunteers from the U.S. Marshals Office and U.S. Probation Offices.

Chief U.S. District Judge Susan O. Hickey presented the *Bene Factum* award to Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Christy Comstock for her ongoing commitment, dedication, and leadership to the district's civics outreach program. Chief Judge Hickey also presented appreciation awards to U.S. Magistrate Judge Barry Bryant and U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Ford for their dedicated service to the district's civics outreach program.

Chief Magistrate Judge Christy Comstock awarded certificates of appreciation to six State of Arkansas judges, four Federal Public Defender attorneys, five U.S. Attorneys, six U.S. Probation Officers, and five U.S. Marshals Deputies for their outstanding service and unwavering commitment to the district's civics outreach program.



Chief U.S. District Judge Susan O. Hickey with U.S. Magistrate Judge Barry Bryant and U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Ford. Photo courtesy of the Western District of Arkansas.

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...and more!

Judge Senechal Visits the University of North Dakota Law School

U.S. Magistrate Judge Alice R. Senechal visited with students from the University of North Dakota Law School in April. As part of the visit, the students were also able to visit with representatives from the U.S. Attorney's Office.

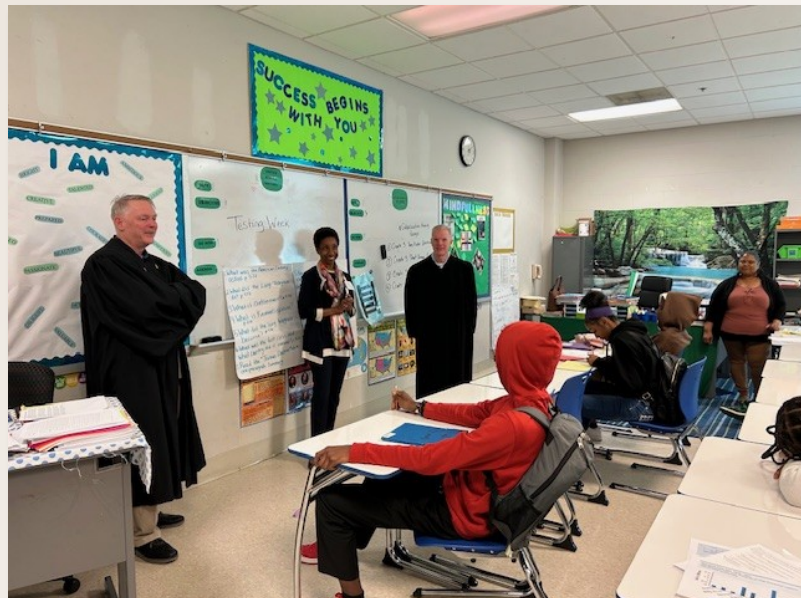


U.S. Magistrate Judge Alice Senechal with University of North Dakota law school students. Photo courtesy of the District of North Dakota.

Robes in Schools Visits Vashon High School in St. Louis

In April, 10-12 U.S. Magistrate Judges visited with students at Vashon High School in St. Louis, Missouri. In the photo below, U.S. Magistrate Judge Stephen Welby from the Eastern District of Missouri, U.S. Magistrate Judge Lisette Reid from the Southern District of Florida, and U.S. Magistrate Judge Daniel Stewart from the Northern District of New York, met and spoke with students.

Robes in Schools events are held in cities where magistrate judges are attending a Federal Judicial Center's workshop. The outreach program, organized by the [Federal Magistrate Judges Association](#), puts magistrate judges in classrooms to engage with students about their career path and work.



U.S. Magistrate Judge Daniel Stewart, U.S. Magistrate Judge Lisette Reid, and U.S. Magistrate Judge Stephen Welby speaking with students at Vashon High School. Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Missouri.

Naturalization Ceremony Held in Little Rock

On June 9, 2025, Chief U.S. District Judge Kristine G. Baker presided over a Naturalization Ceremony at the William J. Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock, Arkansas. Thirty-eight new citizens from 17 countries took the Oath of Allegiance.

Students from Little Rock Central High School, including the Air Force JROTC Color Guard, participated in the ceremony. President Bill Clinton delivered remarks to new citizens and congratulated them after the ceremony.



Top: Naturalization Ceremony participant. Middle: President Bill Clinton greeting new citizens. Bottom: Chief U.S. District Judge Kristine Baker with the Air Force JROTC Color Guard. Photos courtesy of the William J. Clinton Presidential Center.

Naturalization Ceremonies Held in Des Moines

Two Naturalization Ceremonies were held in Des Moines this spring. On April 11, 2025, U.S. Magistrate Judge Helen C. Adams presided over a ceremony that welcomed 41 new citizens at Drake Law School. This was the first ceremony held at the law school. Attendees included law students and faculty, with a welcome by Drake University Dean Roscoe Jones, Jr.

A second ceremony was held on May 23rd at the downtown branch of the Des Moines Public Library. U.S. District Judge Rebecca Goodgame Ebinger presided over the ceremony that welcomed 69 new citizens.



Top: Drake University Dean Roscoe Jones, Jr. and U.S. Magistrate Judge Helen C. Adams with new citizen. Bottom: U.S. District Judge Rebecca Goodgame Ebinger with new citizens. Photos courtesy of the Southern District of Iowa.

U.S. Senator Charles Grassley Holds 6th Annual Federal Judiciary Youth Summit in Cedar Rapids

U.S. Senator Charles Grassley, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, welcomed students from eleven eastern Iowa high schools to the federal courthouse in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

The summit, held on April 14th, was a chance for students to get a glimpse into the federal judiciary and to speak with the senator about the U.S. government. During the question-and-answer session, Senator Grassley answered questions on how senators recommend judicial nominees. Students also heard from Chief U.S. District Judge C.J. Williams about his experience as a federal judge.



U.S. Senator Charles Grassley (left) and Chief U.S. District Judge C.J. Williams (right) speak with students during the summit. Photo courtesy of the Northern District of Iowa.

District of Minnesota Hosts Opening Reception for *Seeds of Justice*

The District of Minnesota held an opening reception for its newest public art installation, *Seeds of Justice*, on April 3rd. The exhibition celebrates Minnesota's unique tradition of crop art while exploring themes of justice, community, and civic engagement. The display includes 17 unique pieces and is on display in the lobby of the Diana E. Murphy U.S. Courthouse in Minneapolis, Minnesota, through July 31, 2025.



The seed art on display. Photo courtesy of the District of Minnesota.

Mock Trial Held in Omaha

A Law Day mock trial based upon the famous fairy tale character Rumpelstiltskin was held at the Omaha, Nebraska, federal courthouse in May. The civil lawsuit was hosted by the Omaha Bar Association with help from actors with the Rose Theater.

Students from Paddock Road Elementary School took part as members of the jury, viewing gallery, and two students sat at the attorney's tables. Chief U.S. District Judge Robert F. Rossiter, Jr. presided over the civil trial, with Douglas County Attorney Don Kleine representing Rumpelstiltskin and Omaha defense attorney Joe Bradley representing Queen Mallory.

The trial was conducted in the similar fashion of an actual civil lawsuit. Chief Judge Rossiter explained to students throughout the trial what was taking place and why it was important to the proceedings. After a short debate, the jury ultimately found in favor of Rumpelstiltskin.



Law Day students with the attorneys, actors, and Chief U.S. District Judge Rossiter (top).
Prentiss Matthews from the Rose Theater testifies as Rumpelstiltskin (bottom).
Photos courtesy of Dave Sommers, Omaha Bar Association. Used with permission.

Naturalization Ceremony Held at Mount Rushmore

A Naturalization ceremony was held at Mount Rushmore National Memorial in South Dakota, on June 15, 2025. Chief U.S. District Judge Roberto Lange presided over the ceremony that welcomed 199 new citizens from 52 different countries.

Each new citizen was welcomed to the front of the amphitheater to share their name, where they were from, and where they live now. During the close of the ceremony, the Dakota Choral Union performed "What a Wonderful World," by Louis Armstrong.



199 new citizens participating in the ceremony (top). A man records the ceremony on his phone (bottom).
Photos courtesy of Matt Weiner, Rapid City Journal. Used with permission.

Girl Scout Troop Visits Courthouse

Girl Scout Troop 6879 from Bauxite, Arkansas, visited the courthouse in Little Rock, Arkansas, on May 1, 2025. The Girl Scouts started by serving as the Color Guard and handing out American flags to new citizens at a Naturalization Ceremony presided over by U.S. District Judge Lee P. Rudofsky.

Later, the scouts and their families received a tour of the courthouse and the U.S. Marshals office.



U.S. District Judge Lee P. Rudofsky with members of Girl Scout Troop 6879.

Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Arkansas.

Law Day Student Event Held in St. Louis

The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals and the Eastern District of Missouri held their annual Law Day student event in May for the 8th grade class from Our Lady of Lourdes, University City.

Prior to the event, the students participated in several classroom activities and wrote essays on the 2025 theme, “Out of Many, One.” First and second place winners were selected from among the essays and earned cash prizes from the Judicial Learning Center.

On the day of the event, the students were welcomed by Chief U.S. District Judge Stephen R. Clark and contest prizes were awarded by Judicial Learning Center Board President Glenn Davis. Students completed an activity in the Judicial Learning Center, observed a courtroom proceeding, and participated in a moot court activity coached by U.S. Magistrate Judge Stephen R. Welby and two attorneys.



Law Day essay winners with Judicial Learning Center President Glenn Davis (left) and Chief U.S. District Judge Stephen R. Clark (right).
Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Missouri and the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Classical Conversations Mock Trial Held in Boone County Courthouse

On April 25, 2025, U.S. Magistrate Judge Helen C. Adams presided over a Classical Conversations Mock Trial at the Boone County Courthouse in Boone, Iowa.



Photo courtesy of the Southern District of Iowa.

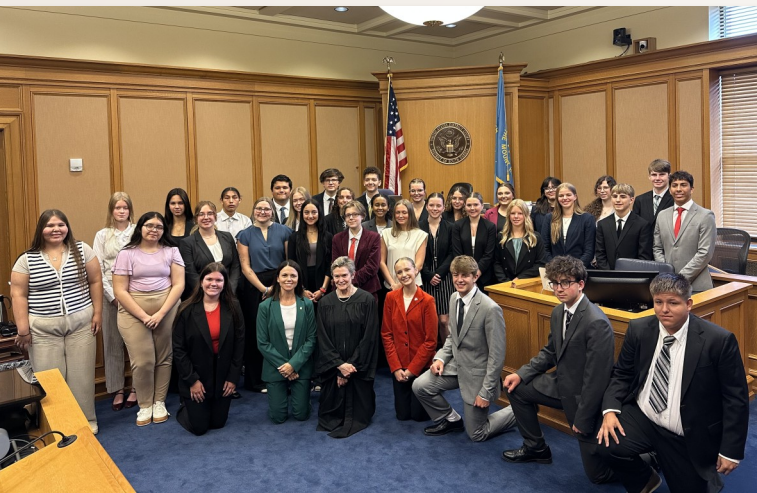
Classical Conversations Mock Trial participants are 8th grade homeschool students who meet weekly to study a variety of subjects, including rhetoric and logic. The students participating were beginning to learn debate, public speaking, and critical thinking skills. The event helped students exercise their skills rather than capture a verdict.

High School Students Participate in Mock Trial in Sioux Falls

A group of 36 high school students stepped into the shoes of legal professionals during a unique mock trial experience held in the courtroom of the federal courthouse in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Organized by U.S. District Judge Karen E. Schreier and her law clerks, the event offered students a hands-on introduction to the American legal system and careers in law.

The mock trial was an integral part of the second annual Summer Law Camp hosted by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of South Dakota. The camp brought high school students from across South Dakota.

The mock trial centered around Ex Parte Crow Dog, an 1883 U.S. Supreme court case that held that the federal government lacked jurisdiction over crimes committed in Indian Country when all parties involved are Native American. Participants were able to take on a wide range of courtroom roles offering them a broad perspective on how the federal court system functions.



Students from the Summer Law Camp with U.S. District Judge Karen E. Schreier.
Photo courtesy of the District of South Dakota.

My ARInternship Program Visits Little Rock Courthouse

On June 23, 2025, U.S. District Judge Lee P. Rudofsky hosted 50 college interns from across the United States at the Richard Sheppard Arnold U.S. Courthouse in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The students were participants in the My ARInternship summer program. They students were able to observe a sentencing hearing, and afterwards were able to participate in questions and answer session with Judge Rudofsky, members of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and the Federal Public Defender’s Office



Students from My ARInternship summer program meeting with U.S. District Judge Lee P. Rudofsky.
Photo courtesy of the Eastern District of Arkansas.

Partners in Policymaking

Senior U.S. District Judge Donovan W. Frank had the privilege of speaking for his 15th year at a Partners in Policymaking class.

Partners in Policymaking is a leadership training program for parents of young children with disabilities and adult self-advocates with disabilities.

Created by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities 38 years ago, the Partners program has been offered nationally and internationally.



Senior U.S. District Judge Donovan W. Frank with participants in Partners in Policymaking. Photo courtesy of the District of Minnesota.

Cornhusker Boys State

On June 2, 2025, U.S. Magistrate Judge Jacqueline DeLuca spoke with 90 students at Cornhusker Boys State. The program's purpose is to teach young adults about the functional aspects of citizenship and to encourage active participation in democracy. Originally created in Illinois in 1935, Boys State now has programs in 49 states and enrolls approximately 20,000 students.



U.S. Magistrate Judge DeLuca addressing members of Cornhusker Boys State.

Photos courtesy of the District of Nebraska.

Court Personnel Visit Shanley High School in Fargo

U.S. Circuit Judge Ralph Erickson, along with attorneys and an officer from the U.S. Probation Office visited two senior government classes at Shanley High School in Fargo, North Dakota. The May visit was a follow-up from their December 2024 visit to the school in recognition of Bill of Rights Day. The panel spoke about their career paths and work and students were able to ask questions.



Students listening to the panel discussion. Photo courtesy of the District of North Dakota.

Girl Scout Mediation Simulation

Each summer, the federal courts in St. Louis, Missouri, partner with the National Park Service to co-host a badge workshop for the Girl Scouts. The Finding Common Ground badge helps participants work through a variety of ways to settle conflicts.

On June 5th, a group of local Girl Scouts earned their Finding Common Ground Badge. After spending the morning at the Old Courthouse at the Gateway Arch National Park, the group walked to the Thomas F. Eagleton Courthouse for simulated mediation activity in the afternoon. The participants were divided into teams and worked with attorney coaches to successfully resolve a cookie sales dispute with the help of a neutral party.

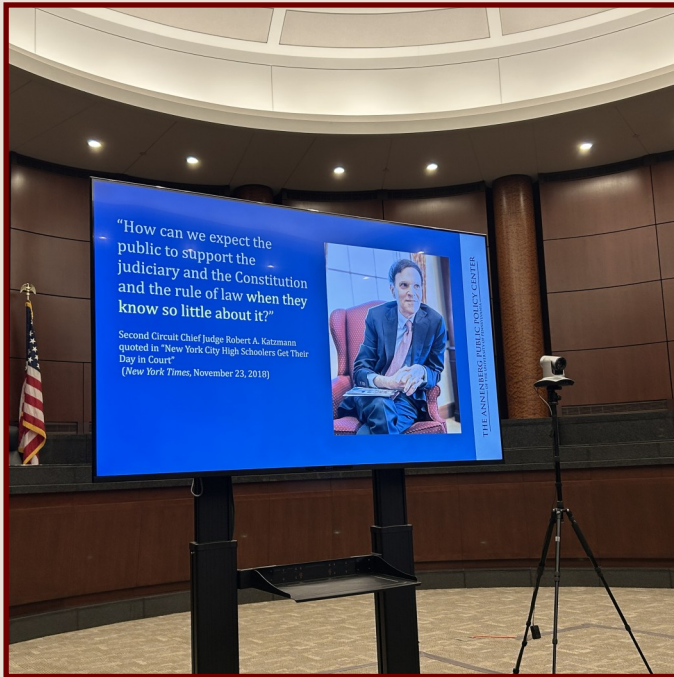


Girl scouts participating in mediation activity at the Thomas F. Eagleton Courthouse.

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



The Honorable Robert A. Katzmann Conference on Civics Education and the Federal Courts Held in St. Louis



A quote from the Hon. Robert A. Katzmann about civics education in the United States.

On April 24, 2025, the Honorable Robert A. Katzmann Conference on Civics Education and the Federal Courts was held at the Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse in St. Louis, Missouri. The Katzmann Civics Conference was hosted by the Eighth Circuit and the Eastern District of Missouri. It was inspired by the first national federal courts' civics conference convened by the late Judge Robert A. Katzmann at the Thurgood Marshall U.S. Courthouse in New York City on October 31, 2019.

There were approximately 140 Conference participants, with judges and court staff from around the country in attendance. Also attending were representatives from five national civics education organizations that are members of the Civics Renewal Network, including the Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics, at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, and 15 high school teachers of history, government, and civics, selected by the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation.

The Conference consisted of a morning plenary session that began with welcoming remarks from the Chief Judges of the Eighth Circuit and the Eastern District of Missouri, as well as the Directors of the Administrative Office of the United States and the Federal Judicial Center, and Judge Sippel as Chair of the Judicial Conference Committee on the Judicial Branch. Chief Justice of the United States, John G. Roberts, Jr., provided a brief video in support of the Conference and judiciary civics education efforts that was shown during the welcoming remarks. The plenary session continued with an interview of Associate Justice Stephen Breyer, conducted by Judge Perry, and a session by Dr. Lance Holbert, Director, Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics.

For most of the day, participants attended breakout sessions of their choice. There were a total of twelve sessions offered, with topics including:

- Cooperative partnerships
- Learning centers and exhibits and displays
- Lifelong learning
- Supporting teachers

A lunchtime program featured the presentation of the Hon. Robert A. Katzmann Civics Impact Award. The Conference concluded with a summary session with reports from each of the breakouts. The nationwide conference will occur again in 5 years.



Hon. Joseph F. Bianco, Second Circuit, Jennifer Callahan, wife of the late Hon. Robert A. Katzmann, and the Hon. Beth Bloom, Southern District of Florida. Judge Bloom accepted the Hon. Robert A. Katzmann Civics Award on behalf of the Civil Discourse and Difficult Conversations program.



Conference participants networking between sessions in the atrium of the En Banc Courtroom.



Hon. Rod Sippel, Eastern District of Missouri, Hon. Robert J. Conrad Jr., Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, and the Hon. John S. Cooke, Director of the Federal Judicial Center.



Dr. Guy Burnett, Chief of Staff and Academics for the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation and James Madison Fellows Educators prior to their panel discussion.