CONNECTICUT DEMOCRACY CENTER
CT DEMOCRACY CENTER NEWS
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High School Students Across CT Flexed Their Constitutional Knowledge at Statewide Competition at Yale University

(Hartford) – High school students from Connecticut were at Yale University on Saturday, February 1, to participate in Connect's We The People: The Citizen and the Constitution Competition. Students have spent the fall and winter studying and researching six units of curriculum developed by the Center for Civic Education to present testimony in front of a panel of judges acting as a congressional committee. Trumbull High School, under the guidance of teacher Katie Boland, won first prize. Second prize was awarded to Staples High School (Westport) and teacher Suzanne Kammerman. Greenwich High School with teacher Aaron Hull took third place. Wilbur Cross High School (New Haven) with teacher Brian Grindrod earned Honorable Mention. After the simulated Congressional Hearings, former Secretary of the State Denise Merrill was on hand at a ceremony to speak with the students and present awards to top prize winners.

The Connecticut Democracy Center offers this school-based program to schools across the state. We The People: The Citizen and the Constitution is designed to increases student knowledge of the United States government through classwork and independent research. Developed by Center for Civic Education, the We the People curriculum is an innovative course of instruction on the history and principles of the United States constitutional democratic republic. The Connecticut Democracy Center and state competition coordinator Erin Simcik are working to expand and hopes to offer the program in more schools across the state.

"We congratulate all of the students for their hard work and poise," says Rebecca Taber, Director of Secondary Education Programs for The Connecticut Democracy Center. "The level of dedication and knowledge displayed by all the students was extremely impressive. We hope this experience sparks a continued interest in civics. Our goal is to expand the program and encourage other schools to consider participating in We The People next year."

The six units of curriculum require students to explore and prepare to answer the following questions:

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1. What Are the Philosophical and Historical Foundations of the American Political System?
2. How Did the Framers Create the Constitution?
3. How Has the Constitution Been Changed to Further the Ideals Contained in the Declaration of Independence?
4. How Have the Values and Principles Embodied in the Constitution Shaped American Institutions and Practices?
5. What Rights Does the Bill of Rights Protect?
6. What Challenges Might Face American Constitutional Democracy in the Twenty-first Century?

Volunteer judges at the competition included educators and legal professionals passionate about the U.S. Constitution and intellectual inquiry. During the simulated hearings, they were responsible for evaluating the performance of students based on a set of criteria, including the student's understanding of the material, constitutional application, reasoning, ability to provide supporting evidence, responsiveness, and participation.

Winners of this competition will be invited to participate at the national We The People competition, hosted by the Center for Civic Education, in Washington, D.C. in the spring.

For more information, visit: https://ctdemocracycenter.org/our-programs/we-the-people/ or https://civiced.org/we-the-people

Denise Merrill, former Secretary of the State (front center) is surrounded by Trumbull High School students who took first place at the We The People Competition with guidance from teacher Katie Boland (back center). The competition, held at Yale University last week, was organized by The Connecticut Democracy Center. Photo courtesy of High Wattage Media, LLC

The Connecticut Democracy Center (CTDC) provides people of all ages with a lifetime pathway to active citizenship and the tools to take civic action in their communities. With a broad range of initiatives, including The Connecticut Network (CT-N), Connecticut's Old State House, Connecticut History Day, Connecticut's Kid Governor®, The Connecticut Democracy Center Debate Tournament, and We The People: The Citizen and The Constitution, The CTDC envisions a society where everyone is empowered to participate in our democracy. Learn more by visiting ctdemocracycenter.org and engaging on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Instagram.