

**Connecticut Judicial Branch Launches its First-Ever Civics Academy;
Recognition of Faculty Set for Feb. 16**



The Connecticut Judicial Branch, in collaboration with the State Department of Education and Connecticut Bar Association, is launching its first-ever Civics Academy to educate fifth-grade students about their role and responsibilities in a democratic society.

Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson will address the importance of the Civics Academy during a recognition of the judges and attorneys who have volunteered to serve as faculty. The event will occur on Thursday, Feb. 16, at 3 p.m. in the Supreme Court courtroom, 231 Capitol Ave. in Hartford. Other speakers will include Stephen Armstrong, social studies consultant for the Department of Education; Attorney Daniel J. Horgan, president of the Connecticut Bar Association; and Lisa Hopkins, a fifth-grade teacher from Andover Elementary School.

The Civics Academy's student-centered curriculum is structured in a way so as not to create extra work for teachers. A judge and an attorney will present the 50-minute lesson, which is entirely self-contained; teachers do not have to prep their students beforehand. A foundation is established with the first activity and then students build upon that foundation throughout the lesson. The first section is *Rules and Fairness*; the second, *Representative Democracy*; and the third, *Democracy and You*. All participating judges and attorneys have received training on how to deliver the lesson plan, which the Young Lawyers Section of the Connecticut Bar Association had developed previously.

“The work of the Judicial Branch’s Civics Academy has never been more important,” Chief Justice Robinson said. “The short-term rewards are obvious: in an interactive and fun way, and class by class, we will teach children about the courts, our democracy, and their role in it. In the long-term, we hope that they will remember these lessons and as adults, be active citizens of our democracy.

“I am so grateful to the Department of Education and the Connecticut Bar Association for their participation, because frankly, this program would not have been as outstanding without

them,” the Chief Justice added. “We are also incredibly thankful for the input from Jessica Green, a former teacher who taught elementary, middle school, and high school students. She assisted the judges and attorneys in the training and provided tips on how to best engage students.”

Mr. Armstrong echoed the Chief Justice’s message regarding the importance of a civics education.

“I am incredibly thankful for the launch of the Civics Academy and for the services that it will provide for Connecticut’s schools, teachers, and students,” Mr. Armstrong said. “Enhanced resources and activities for civics education are crucial; in 2023, we need our students to be aware of the value of local, state, and national government and of their own role in civic life. The State Department of Education will do whatever possible to publicize the Civics Academy and lauds all of the efforts that have taken place to establish this resource.”

Attorney Horgan noted the important tie-in to the rule of law.

“The Connecticut Bar Association is proud to partner with the Judicial Branch in supporting this most critical program,” Attorney Horgan said. “The Civics Academy will bring judges and lawyers to elementary school classrooms to learn about civics. The attacks on our justice system and the rule of law are aggravated by a lack of understanding of civics. How can we expect young students to grow up to be informed and engaged citizens if they are not taught the basic civics – just as we all were taught when we were students? Civics education is one of the cornerstones of our democracy, and we believe programs like the Civics Academy are valuable and necessary at this critical time in our country’s history.”

For further information, please contact the External Affairs Division at 860-757-2270.

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