



## We the People THE CITIZEN AND THE CONSTITUTION

Directed by the Center for Civic Education and funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Education for Democracy Act approved by the United States Congress.

### **Instructions for Judges**

#### **Prior to Orientation**

- Judges should familiarize themselves with the *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* text and have an understanding of the unit(s) they will be judging as well as the related hearing questions.
- Judges should be made aware of the basic structure of the program. The simulated congressional hearing is a culminating activity of the classroom program. Every member of the class will participate in at least one of the six unit groups that will make presentations and answer questions on their unit of the textbook. No student may participate in more than two groups. (See *Guidelines & Rules for Competition*)

#### **During Orientation**

- Judges should help students to (1) demonstrate what they have learned, (2) take pride in the knowledge and skills they have acquired, (3) deepen their understanding of, and appreciation for, the values and principles inherent in the Constitution, (4) sharpen their insight into the role of the citizen in American constitutional democracy, and (5) foster a determination to participate in the political life of their community and nation.
- Judges should be familiar with the time allocations for the hearing, i.e., four-minutes for opening statements and six-minutes for responses to judges' questions. If students do not use the entire four-minutes for their opening statement, the remaining time will be added to the response time for follow-up questions.
- Judges should designate one member of their panel as the chair for the proceedings. If hearing more than one class, they may rotate the designation.

#### **Guidelines for Follow-up Questioning**

- Judges may
  - ask questions based on a group's opening statement
  - use the follow-up questions provided by the Center
  - develop their own follow-up questions
- Judges may choose to ask each class the same follow-up questions or they may vary the questions based on each class's response.

- Judges should not ask follow-up questions that include obscure references to case law or historical facts.
- The six-minute response time includes the time used by judges to pose their questions. Judges should decide in advance of the hearing the order in which they will ask questions.
- Judges should avoid lengthy and multiple part follow-up questions. If judges extend the time, they may add time to the six-minute questioning period to compensate.
- If a student is in the middle of a sentence or thought when time is called at the end of the six-minutes, judges should allow the student to finish briefly.

### **During the Hearing**

- Judges should speak loudly enough for the entire audience to hear.
- The chair should introduce himself/herself, ask the other judges to do the same, and ask the group to introduce themselves.
- The panel should attempt to establish rapport with the students and try to alleviate their anxiety before the hearing begins.
- Students may refer to notes during their opening statement and should not be penalized for doing so. Notes must be put away after their opening statement and may not be referred to during follow-up questioning.
- The chair should read the selected hearing question to the students. Timing begins when students begin to speak.
- All judges should give the students feedback on their performance.
- Feedback may be directed at the entire student panel or to individuals.
- Feedback should be both positive and critical.
- Judges should congratulate the students and teacher for their accomplishments and recognize the support of parents and members of the community.

### **Scoring**

- Before beginning a hearing, judges should ascertain that they have the appropriate score sheet (correct teacher name, school name, and/or unit number).
- Judges will score each group on the basis of six criteria. These criteria are: understanding, constitutional application, reasoning, supporting evidence, responsiveness, and participation. These criteria are more fully explained on the Congressional Hearing Group Score Sheet and

the Scoring Guide. Throughout their assessment of student performance, judges should be careful to base their scores on the six established criteria and not on whether the judges agree with a position students might take.

- Judges should score within a range of 1-10 points. Judges are permitted to change their initial scores; once they have observed the performance of all groups they may wish to modify their initial scores. Once scores have been turned in to competition officials they may not be changed.
- To gain perspective on group performances, judges should consult with each other on how each group is scored. Judges do not need to agree on scores.
- Students should not be penalized for manner of dress or personal appearance.
- Students should not be penalized for asking judges to repeat, clarify, or re-phrase their follow-up questions.
- Judges must fill in the tie-breaker score and sign their score sheets before turning them in to the competition officials. Tie-breaker scores are used if total unit and/or total class scores are identical.