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Student Involvement Is a Focus of Constitution Day 2017

PHILADELPHIA – (September 13, 2017) – Thousands of students across the United States will take the “Preamble Challenge” to celebrate Constitution Day this year and participate in naturalization ceremonies to swear in new U.S. citizens.

Naturalization ceremonies will be conducted by the federal judiciary coast-to-coast during September. Constitution Day (Sept. 17), the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution in 1787, falls on a Sunday and will be observed on Monday, Sept. 18.

Students will play a part in a number of the naturalization ceremonies, which are being held at iconic sites, community landmarks, federal courthouses and schools, ranging from a public high school in Alaska to the University of Southern Maine.

“We welcome students at naturalization ceremonies as part of the federal courts’ national civics education outreach initiative,” said U.S. District Judge Cynthia M. Rufe of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, who is presiding over the ceremony at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. “Participating in a swearing-in ceremony for new citizens is a real-life experience of civic engagement as a means of civics education.”

Civics education is a key component of Constitution Day. A [survey](#) released this week by the [Annenberg Public Policy Center](#) found that just a quarter of Americans can name all three branches of the U.S. government and more than a third cannot name any.

The Preamble Challenge

Classes and schools across the nation will join in the [Preamble Challenge](#), in which students are challenged to recite, perform, rap, sing, dance or otherwise creatively celebrate the 52 words of the Preamble to the Constitution (“We the People...”). The event will be kicked off Monday morning with students reciting the Preamble on the front lawn of the [National Constitution Center](#), led by Constitution Center President and CEO Jeffrey Rosen.

Teachers and classes from Washington to Florida have signed up for the Challenge with the [Civics Renewal Network](#), an alliance of nonpartisan organizations that are dedicated to making free, high-quality civics resources available online. Classes taking part in the Challenge are encouraged to share their activities on Twitter and Instagram by using #RenewCivics.



Naturalization ceremonies

Immigrants will be sworn in as new citizens by federal judges at more than three dozen sites across the country during September, with most of the ceremonies on Friday, Sept. 15, and Monday, Sept. 18. Iconic sites include Glacier National Park in Montana; the National Archives in Washington, D.C.; and the homes or libraries of Presidents Harry S. Truman in Missouri, Herbert Hoover in Iowa, and Thomas Jefferson (Poplar Forest retreat) in Virginia.

Student participants at the ceremonies may recite the Preamble, lead the Pledge of Allegiance, sing the national anthem, serve as a color guard, or present new citizens with welcome letters.

For new citizens, naturalization ceremonies can be emotional experiences. As one put it last year, in a [video](#) produced by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, “I have fallen in love with the U.S., with all the freedom that people enjoy here and all the things that the U.S. stands for.” In the words of another: “Coming here was the single best decision that I ever made.”

The Civics Renewal Network

These ceremonies are part of a series of events organized by the 31 partners in the [Civics Renewal Network](#), which seeks to raise the visibility of civics education by providing free, high-quality resources for teachers of all grade levels. CRN’s partners are: ABOTA Foundation, American Bar Association, Annenberg Classroom, Annenberg Learner, Ashbrook Center’s TeachingAmericanHistory.org, Bill of Rights Institute, Center for Civic Education, ConSource: The Constitutional Sources Project, Constitutional Rights Foundation, Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, Dirksen Congressional Center, Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate, George Washington’s Mount Vernon, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, iCivics, Indiana University Center on Representative Government, James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation, Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Constitution Center, National Endowment for the Humanities’ EDSITEment! Project, National History Day, Newseum, Share My Lesson, Street Law, Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, U.S. Courts, U.S. Government Publishing Office, What So Proudly We Hail, and Youth Leadership Initiative.

Constitution Day and Citizenship Day (Sept. 17) commemorates the signing of the Constitution in 1787 and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Since the passage of the Byrd Amendment in 2004, educational institutions that receive federal funds are required to teach about the U.S. Constitution on Sept. 17.

To learn more, go to civicsrenewalnetwork.org and follow on Twitter @CivicsRenewal.