



Federal Bar Association

CIVICS REPORT

This civics update is published quarterly. If your chapter has conducted a civics program and would like to be featured in our next report, please contact [Jenn French](#).

Featuring Civics Programs Around the United States

The Federal Bar Association supports civics education and community outreach through our chapters nationwide. See a program you'd like to replicate locally? Visit our Outreach page for more details.

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Recent Programs

This quarter, several chapters used the Court's [Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions](#) program toolkit to host local civics events. Our toolkits make it easy for judges, attorneys, and teachers to host meaningful events while not reinventing the wheel. To learn more about the wealth of resources available to FBA chapters, visit the [Educational Activities page](#) on the U.S. Courts website.



On April 15, 2025, 15 students from St. Lucie West Centennial High School visited the U.S. District Court in Fort Pierce, Florida for a Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions program. Attorney volunteers from the Palm Beach Chapter of the Federal Bar Association and the St. Lucie Bar Association welcomed the students. The day started with introductions and a courtroom tour. The students engaged in discussions about the importance of civility and civil discourse and then broke out into small groups to prepare for mock oral argument. U.S. Magistrate Judge Shaniek M. Maynard presided over the mock fact pattern tailored after *Elonis v. United States*, 575 U.S. 723 (2015). At the conclusion of oral argument, Judge Maynard revealed what happened in *Elonis* and hosted a Q&A session where everyone reflected on the arguments made by both sides and engaged with the attorneys and the Judge.

To learn more about the Palm Beach County Chapter's Civics Outreach Committee or to participate in upcoming programming, please contact [Violette Bishai](#).



After several years of running successful civics programs in the Northern District of Oklahoma, the Northern/Eastern Oklahoma Chapter ran a civics program on April 16, 2025, in the Eastern District of Oklahoma at the Ed Edmondson U.S. Courthouse. Hon. Jason A. Robertson presided over an enriching and rewarding event with 34 Wagoner High School seniors and also featured the toolkit for Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions. Before the event, Judge Robertson and the U.S. Marshals treated the students to a tour of this historic and beautiful courthouse. After the event, the Chapter treated the students and attorney volunteers to pizza, while the Marshals did a presentation on their role in the judicial system and showed examples of the tactical gear they wear when apprehending a high-risk suspect. The Chapter could not have put on the event without the help and support of EDOK Court Clerk Bonnie Hackler, the EDOK Marshals and courthouse staff, and attorney volunteers: Ben and Kara Traster, Brian Deer, Gabrielle Jolliff, Jill Webb, Jessie Pippin, Morgan Muzjakovich, Jonathan Soverly, Nicole Paladino, and Tom Duncombe. To learn more about this program and the Northern/Eastern Oklahoma Chapter's civics outreach, please contact [Tom Duncombe](#).



On April 30, 2025, the Northern/Eastern Oklahoma FBA Chapter hosted its third high school civics event of the semester! The Chapter welcomed 25 seniors from Charles Page High School to the Page Belcher federal courthouse in Tulsa. Attorney volunteers, comprised of FBA Members and colleagues, led the students through the Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions course, with Hon. Jodi F. Jayne once again volunteering her time and her infectious energy to preside. U.S. Probation Officer and Chapter Board Member Sean Dooley organized the event. AP Government Teacher Frank Cooper had his students motivated and ready to learn about civics, the Constitution, and how to have difficult discussions in a civil and productive manner. Lunch followed, courtesy of a 2024 Community Outreach Grant from the Foundation of the FBA. The Chapter is grateful to Judge Jayne, Clerk of Court Heidi Campbell, and all the wonderful volunteers. To learn more about this program and the Northern/Eastern Oklahoma Chapter's civics outreach, please contact [Tom Duncombe](#).



On May 1-2, 2025, the Chapter for the Districts of Kansas and Western Missouri visited classrooms across NE Kansas and in the Western District Missouri to talk to students about civics and the rule of law. This year, FBA members including judges and members of the bar visited over 500 students at five schools in three cities. Presenters talked to grade school through high school aged students. This is one of the most impactful projects the Chapter organizes, and presenters and teachers both expressed how meaningful and worthwhile the experience was. For more information on this program, please contact Chapter member [Kate Marples Simpson](#).



On May 8, 2025, Legal Prep Charter Academy recognized the FBA's Chicago Chapter with its Volunteer Impact Award at the school's annual *Eat. Drink. Give.* celebration and fundraiser. Chapter President Erin Franzblau, Vice President Kristine Argentine, and Secretary Elizabeth Ekl accepted the award on behalf of the Chapter. Since 2016, members of the Chicago Chapter have donated their time to inspire the next generation of leaders through the "FBA Guest Teacher Series" at Legal Prep, a legal-themed charter school in West Garfield Park, one of Chicago's most underserved neighborhoods. Attorney volunteers challenge students to tackle serious subjects, such as Eighth Amendment issues regarding punishment and bail, while also sharing personal stories about what sparked their passion for law. Discussion topics are developed in collaboration with the full-time classroom teacher, a former patent attorney who prepares students beforehand and provides volunteers with a "cheat sheet" of study materials. Volunteers and students work in small groups, facilitating engaging discussions that make learning fun and rewarding for everyone. As described by Alejandro Ortega, aboard member of both the Chicago Chapter and Legal Prep: "Most volunteers approach the sessions with the intent of giving back to the community, but what surprises them are the many unexpected rewards they get from the experience. They form real connections with students, gain fresh perspectives and insights on subjects they thought they understood well, and take pride in knowing they've made a positive impact—perhaps inspiring the next generation of lawyers and leaders to pursue their dreams." To learn more about the Chicago Chapter's partnership with Legal Prep or

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for information on how to establish a "guest teacher series" at a local high school, feel free to contact [Alejandro Ortega](#).

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