



Federal Bar Association

CIVICS

REPORT

January 2026

The Court's [Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions program](#) toolkit continues to be a popular tool for chapters to host local civics events. This quarter, our Chapters also coordinated student observations at a variety of judicial proceedings, including oral arguments, trials and naturalization ceremonies. To learn more about the wealth of resources available to FBA chapters, visit the [Educational Activities page](#) on the U.S. Courts.

The latest national educational outreach initiative developed by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) is [Open Doors to Careers in the Courts](#). The program, which can be conducted in classrooms or courtrooms, gives high school students exposure to a range of careers in the court system and the legal community. In the classroom program, three-person teams that include a judge, an FBA volunteer, and a non-attorney court professional, respond to students' questions about the Bill of Rights and opportunities to serve the cause of justice. In the courtroom program, students participate in a realistic simulation of a hearing and interact with the people and processes of the federal courts. For more information and the program package, that includes 1) how-to information, 2) the video, and 3) a PowerPoint, contact the AO's national educational outreach manager [Rebecca Fanning](#).

The FBA Chapter for the Districts of Kansas and Western Missouri hosts annual Constitution Day events at courthouses across the Chapter's two-state geographic area. This year's events were held in Wichita and Lawrence, Kansas, on September 17, 2025. Both events took place in historic courthouses and were open to the public. At the Federal Courthouse in Wichita, attendees included parents, teachers, and schoolchildren, two TV stations (KSN & KAKE), Chief Judge John W. Broomes, District Judge Eric F. Melgren, Magistrate Judge Gwynne E. Birzer, Wichita Mayor Lily Wu, and a large host of other lawyers and court personnel. Chief Judge Broomes met with participants before the reading to explain some of the court's functions and answer very creative questions from schoolchildren. In Lawrence, Douglas County Chief Judge James McCabria met with participants in the recently restored courtroom that is now used by the Douglas County Commission, providing some context for the reading. At each location, participants took turns reading the Constitution (which takes

around an hour). In Douglas County, students from Raintree Montessori School memorized and recited the preamble. Both locations enjoyed a short reception after the event with cake or cookies and fellowship. Please contact [Kate Simpson](#) for more information on the Chapter's Constitution Day events.

On September 19, 2025, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, Miami Division, and the FBA South Florida Chapter celebrated Constitution Day. U.S. District Court Judges Darrin P. Gayles and Rodolfo A. Ruiz II presided over the event with 28 students from Hialeah Gardens Senior High School. The program began with a naturalization ceremony presided by Judge Gayles, which the students observed. The then students visited Judge Gayles's courtroom and had a substantive discussion with the Judge about his career and other topics related to the practice of law. Finally, the students observed two changes of plea hearings in front of Judge Ruiz, who also answered questions from the students. For more information on the program or how you can get involved with the South Florida Chapter, please contact [Yisel Valdes](#).

On September 23, 2025, the Chicago Chapter hosted a screening of "Trial in the Delta," a filmed stage reenactment of the trial of the murderers of Emmett Till based on actual trial transcripts created by local theater group Collaboraction. K&L Gates sponsored the event—captioned "A Miscarriage of Justice"—which marked the 70th anniversary of the acquittal. Following the screening, an audience of judges, lawyers, law students, teachers, law enforcement, and other community members participated in what Collaboraction called a "crucial conversation" where they processed their reactions and discussed using empathy, knowledge, dialogue, and action to combat the biases the trial revealed.

The event's highlight, however, was the first-hand account of life in the Delta at the time of Till's murder from the Honorable Arlander Keys (Ret.). Magistrate Judge Keys—now at JAMS—grew up in nearby Balzoni, Mississippi, and was around the same age as Till. Judge Keys vividly described life in the segregated deep south and lessons his community learned not only from Till's murder, but the murder of Rev. George W. Lee earlier that summer. Rev. Lee, co-founder of the Belzoni NAACP chapter, was targeted for registering African American voters. Judge Keys expressed the importance of educating oneself to understand bias and his primary tool for overcoming obstacles they created in his life.

Collaboraction Artistic Director Anthony Mosely, a project co-creator, described the unearthing of the transcripts and the creative process leading to the Emmy-winning film, its goals, and other efforts by the Emmett Till & Mamie Till-Mobley Institute to preserve and promote accurate information about this seminal historical event. J. Bryan Wood, an employment and civil rights attorney with the Kaplan Law Firm, PLLC, moderated the discussion and shared information about biases, how they work, examples in the legal profession, and strategies to overcome them.

For more information on the Chicago Chapter's programming, please contact [Alejandro Ortega](#).



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