

## Federal Courts' National Educational Outreach Initiatives Involve, Inform, Inspire, and Ignite

The signature programs of the federal courts' national educational outreach initiative are realistic simulations in courtrooms and candid conversations in classrooms that have carved out a unique niche in civics education. Unlike mock trials, the courtroom simulations focus on [jury deliberations](#) that allow every student and learning style to participate. Students serve as [judges, jurors, and attorneys](#) during hearings on contemporary, teen-relevant issues. The presiding federal judges and attorney volunteers involve, inform, inspire, and ignite participation. The events, which are offered in almost every Circuit, are part of a coordinated, [national strategy](#) that engages participants from high school and beyond by achieving the following learning objectives.

### Learning Objectives of Events and Web Resources

- To create meaningful connections between the public and [the federal judiciary](#).
- To [counter misinformation and disinformation](#) through positive interactions with the judiciary.
- To establish [understanding and rapport](#) with [judges](#), lawyers, and non-attorney court personnel in courtrooms, classrooms, and communities.
- To strengthen [the pipeline to careers in the courts](#) by exposing young people across demographic and socio-economic backgrounds to positive, in-person and [virtual interactions](#) with the courts.
- To motivate young people and adults to [serve willingly on juries](#) when called.

One of the signature, national programs is [Civil Discourse and Difficult Decisions that is offered in courtrooms](#). This [program](#) and other highly interactive learning experiences are tailored to [high school, community college, and university students](#), as well as [law school students](#). [Candid Conversations](#) is a streamlined, classroom experience that focuses on a lively Q/A session with judges, attorneys, and non-attorney court professionals.

In every program time is committed to small-group interactions with a range of judges, attorneys, and non-attorney court professionals who create a welcoming environment conducive to open communication. The primary objectives of courtroom and classroom programs are to foster [critical thinking](#), inoculate against misinformation, and feed the career pipeline. Immersive programs such as [court camps](#) bring students into courthouses for firsthand exposure to legal processes and careers

For adults, a well-developed and growing national network of [teachers institutes](#) and [professional development](#) programs at local courthouses enriches educators' court literacy and teaching skills that shape the next generation of engaged citizens, jurors, judges, journalists, lawyers, litigants and justice system professionals. Adult education programs reach adults in their [communities](#) and students at community colleges.

Resources posted on [<uscourts.gov>](#) and used in courtrooms and classrooms include contemporary, teen-relevant scenarios that are superimposed on landmark Supreme Court cases to bring the courts into daily life. Issues include social media controversies, school walkouts, backpack searches, and protests for lowering the voting age. Participatory programs, and the web resources that support them, can be presented in-person or virtually. They require less than 45 minutes of preparation on the part of judges and volunteers, and no preparation on the part of teachers and students. Programs focus on the pillars of court literacy including –the [rule of law](#), [separation of powers](#), [judicial impartiality](#), and [jury service](#). Discussion-starter videos, ranging from one minute to seven minutes, are posted on the federal judiciary's [YouTube channel](#).

### Biographical Information

*Rebecca Fanning started the federal courts' national educational outreach function at the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AO) in 1998, after 10 years as the first Court Information Officer/Press Secretary for the Minnesota Supreme Court. She began her career as a reporter for United Press International and was the first public relations director at the Star Tribune in Minneapolis. She can be reached at [rebecca\\_fanning@ao.uscourts.gov](mailto:rebecca_fanning@ao.uscourts.gov)*

### Directory of Resources

[Educational Resources](#) on [<uscourts.gov>](#)  
[Federal Judiciary YouTube Channel](#)