

EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY

California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools

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STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON CONSTITUTION DISPLAYED AT STATE CAPITOL

**5,000 K-12 students from 36 California school districts submitted art and writing
to explain what they think is most important about the U.S. Constitution**

Sacramento.... Today, students from throughout California got a chance to have their work displayed at the State Capitol in an official ceremony attended by educators, legislators, students, teachers and community leaders. The student display is a compelling compilation of artwork and writing that reflects what students think about the U.S. Constitution. The work was submitted as part of a State Constitution Day Project sponsored by *Educating for Democracy: the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools (CMS)*, a project of Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) in collaboration with the Center for Civic Education and the Alliance for Representative Democracy. *CMS* invited teachers and students from throughout California to participate in its Constitution Week activities in September. Teachers were provided with free lessons and resources to help them assist their students to understand the key concepts of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Students were asked to create 5" x 5" panels that represent what they think is most important about the Constitution. Submitted panels included everything from elaborate artwork to poems about democracy to compelling thoughts about our rights as citizens. Students wrote and drew pictures about the Preamble as well as the amendments. *CMS* staff received over 5,000 entries from students in 36 school districts and representing every single grade level from K-12, in addition to special education and juvenile court classes. *"The Constitution in itself is a great document. Not one part is more important than another, because without the preamble or say the Bill of Rights the Constitution just wouldn't be the same..."*, stated one middle school student.

At today's event, Keri Doggett, Project Co-Chair thanked Assemblymember Betty Karnette for her work in ensuring that 1,200 of the panels will be displayed for viewing at the State Capitol. The remainder, Doggett explained, will be displayed at sites throughout California.

In her remarks, Assemblymember Karnette commented, *"As a legislator who taught school for thirty years, I feel a unique responsibility to help improve student knowledge about our system of government and how it works and as a major supporter of both civics and the arts, I am very excited to see the amazing level of interest that this project has garnered statewide."*

Jane Highstreet is a senior in the Academic Honors Program, PACE and Student Body President at John F. Kennedy High School in Sacramento. She attended the event today to show her support for the *Civic Mission's* work. Kennedy High School has been a *CMS* Pilot School for over a year. The students and teachers there have collaborated to create a variety of innovative programs to ensure that all Kennedy students graduate with the skills, knowledge and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell, a longtime supporter of the *Civic Mission for Schools* commented, *"Our nation's founders recognized that our government would survive only with educated and committed citizens". "Today it is every bit as important that all young people not only learn about the Constitution but that they fully understand its importance in keeping our country free and strong."*

At the completion of the program, both Assemblymember Karnette and State Superintendent O'Connell were presented with commemorative versions of the Constitution Day Panels. *Educating for Democracy: the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools* is focused on improving the state of civic education in California and ensuring that every student in the State understands their constitutional heritage and the rights and responsibilities of effective citizenship. The project is promoted by a broad coalition of business leaders, educators, judges, lawyers and legislators. For more information on this project, visit www.cms-ca.org