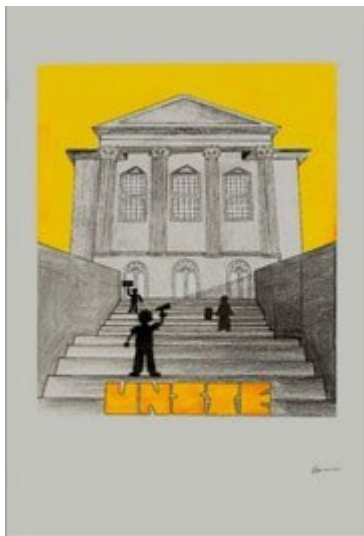


## COURTS 4 CIVICS

*Through the Courts4Civics initiative, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit promotes civics education in our schools and communities. Read on to find out about ongoing initiatives and to discover how you can get involved!*

### Bill of Rights Day: Art Contest Ceremony and Bill of Rights in Your Life



On February 4, 2025, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit hosted a virtual ceremony celebrating the winners of the Bill of Rights Day Student Video & Art Contest.

Bill of Rights Day, celebrated this year on December 15, 2024, served as the inspiration for Courts4Civics's inaugural video and art contest. Students from across the circuit submitted drawings, paintings, songs, and videos exploring the Supreme Court's ruling in *Edwards v. South Carolina*, protecting the right of Americans to participate in peaceful protest. The winners were invited to a virtual ceremony commemorating their hard work and artistic talents.

*"Some of the most powerful messages are those presented by an artist who never utters a word. They design something, create something, paint something. They put pen to paper and make music, but those messages are every bit as powerful as the spoken and written word."*

*-Chief Judge Albert Diaz*

On December 3, 2024, Magistrate Judges from the Eastern District of Virginia, William Fitzpatrick and Lindsey Vaala, along with Tanzania Jaysura, Assistant United States Attorney, served as panel members in a “Bill of Rights in Your Life” program at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, Virginia. About 90 students enrolled in “Law in Action” and “U.S. Government” at Lake Braddock gathered to hear from the panel and ask them questions.

***“In today’s world, in which sources of information can be challenging to assess and test, it feels particularly important for members of the judiciary and government to engage in person with the community and with young people specifically.”***

**-Magistrate Judge Vaala**

Read these articles on the [Courts4Civics website](#)



## **Civics Education through Art & Technology**

**New project launched in the Southern District of  
W.Va.**

In promoting civics education, Chief Judge Volk has developed an initiative to transform public art into an interactive learning experience for students: *The Ever-Emerging Canvas of Freedom: Understanding our Legacy and Progress and Embracing our Continuing Duty to Shape the Future and Expand the American Dream*. The display in the Robert C. Byrd United States Courthouse in Charleston, West Virginia, features 45 vivid depictions of key events in American history, spanning from the landing of the Pilgrims to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

***“This exhibit serves as a visual reminder of our Nation’s continuing journey toward justice and civic engagement.”***

The exhibition is designed, in part, not just to present historical events. It also emphasizes our shared civic responsibilities and the role we play in shaping the future of our Country, encouraging visitors to consider the courage and sacrifices of those who came before us. It underscores the importance of civic education and obligation.



The exhibit is just one part of a much larger civics education outreach. Each of the 45 events depicted in the exhibit will serve as the foundation for a paired, five-minute “AI-created” video and accompanying “Kahoot!” digital quiz. You can test your knowledge and view [the first video/quiz combination here](#).

*Read this article on the Courts4Civics [website](#)*

## **Civics Across the Circuit: Judges from Virginia and South Carolina Participate in Civic Engagement Efforts**

Across South Carolina, eight judges participated in eight different civics outreach events during “Civics Week,” February 17-21, 2025. These events ranged from a mock trial with a group of high schoolers in Greenville to hosting 100 fourth-graders in Columbia to speaking to a US Government class on the role of federal courts in our judicial system in Charleston. We appreciate the efforts of Judge Cameron McGowan Currie, Judge Sherri Lydon, Magistrate Judge Shiva Hodges, Senior Judge Joe Anderson, Magistrate Judge William Brown, Magistrate Judge Kevin McDonald, Magistrate Judge Mary Gordon Baker, and Magistrate Judge Molly Cherry. Read the full summary of the South Carolina Civics Week events on the Courts4Civics [website](#).

### **Court in the Classroom**



Magistrate Judge Molly Cherry visited an honors United States government class at Burke High School in downtown Charleston.

Magistrate Judge Shiva Hodges talked about the necessity of checks and balances within our government, the role the federal courts play in ensuring that takes place, and the importance of preserving individual civil liberties.

If you have hosted a student outreach in your courthouse or would like assistance in hosting such an event, please reach out to the Courts4Civics committee at [civics@ca4.uscourts.gov](mailto:civics@ca4.uscourts.gov).

Read the full SC Civics Week article [here](#)



## Civil Discourse in the Western District of Virginia



**“We thought we were coming solely to help the students but left inspired and energized”**

**-Magistrate Judge Kai Memmer**

On January 29, 2025, Magistrate Judge Kai Memmer hosted a Civil Discourse & Difficult Decisions program in Roanoke, Virginia. More than twenty high school students from North Cross School participated in the program.

Court members of the Western District of Virginia hope to schedule several additional civics programs before the end of the school year. They are working with local FBA members to reach out to schools in the Roanoke area. Check out the full article [here](#)

## 2025 Fourth Circuit Student Essay Contest

The essay contest is now open to all students currently in grades 6 through 12 from Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia.



Forty years ago, the Supreme Court held in *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, 469 U.S. 325 (1985), that the Fourth Amendment's prohibition on unreasonable searches and seizures applies to the conduct of public school officials. Based on the facts of the case, the Court upheld as reasonable a warrantless search of a student's purse by school officials. Almost 30 years later, the Supreme Court held in *Riley v. California*, 573 U.S. 373 (2014), that cell phones generally cannot be searched without a warrant.

Students are invited to consider and share their thoughts on the question: "How do *T.L.O.* and *Riley* impact the search of a student's cell phone by school officials on public school grounds, and how would you protect a student's rights while balancing the school's responsibility to maintain a safe and effective learning environment?"

Find out more about the contest [here](#)

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## Help Us Spread the Word

Promote civics education by forwarding this email to a friend, colleague, educator, or family member!

### About Courts4Civics

An initiative of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, Courts4Civics promotes civics education in our schools and communities, to create learning opportunities and to increase public understanding of how courts work to resolve disputes in our society and to protect our constitutional rights.

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