

# THE LegiSchool

Volume 3, Issue 1

Fall 2001

# PROJECT



## The LegiSchool Project

Welcome back to school and another exciting year of LegiSchool activities!

Last year was one of our most successful years ever with more than four hundred students attending LegiSchool meetings at the Capitol. Students represented twenty-eight high schools ranging from the Bay Area, to all parts of Southern California, the Central Valley and the extreme north of the state. Our thanks to all of the teachers who made the effort to involve their students in LegiSchool meetings.

In addition to those classes and teachers who actually attended meetings in Sacramento, approximately 375 teachers ordered LegiSchool materials last year—a testament to the engaging subjects that were addressed: violence at schools, religion in public education, the High School Exit Exam and the influence of corporate advertising at our schools to name just a few. These meetings, along with other LegiSchool materials, are designed to get young people to think critically about their government and the policies that lawmakers implement which effect young people's lives, to exercise sound judgment, and to care about the rights and welfare of their fellow citizens.

Founded in 1994, the LegiSchool Project is an award *continued on page 2*

## Mission Statement

The LegiSchool Project is a civic education collaboration between California State University, Sacramento, and the California State Legislature, administered by the Center for California Studies. The Project's mission is to engage young people in matters of public policy and state government by creating opportunities for students and state leaders to meet and share ideas on the problems affecting Californians. In doing so, we hope to motivate young people to take an interest in the public life around them and to encourage their active participation in our political process.

## Thank you...

The LegiSchool Project wishes to thank the following legislators for their participation in 2000/01 LegiSchool Town Hall Meetings:

Senators Patrick Johnston, Ray Haynes, Bill Morrow, Jack O'Connell, and Jack Scott; and Assembly Member Joe Nation.

### Additional thanks to:

Saeed Ali, Office of Senator Polanco

Dylan Bernstein, Center for Commercial-Free Public Education

Greg Haskin, PepsiCo

Manny Hernandez, Sacramento City Unified School District Trustee

Yumi Matsui, Youth Vote 2000

Saskia Mills, California Voter Foundation

And a special thanks and acknowledgement to the Wells Fargo Foundation for their generous support of the LegiSchool Real World Civics Summer Internship Program.

"By supporting the LegiSchool Project, Wells Fargo furthers its commitment to improving and sustaining our local communities," said Wells Fargo Regional President Pamela M. Conboy.

## Dear Friends,

Welcome to another invigorating year of LegiSchool. On behalf of the California State Legislature, California State University, Sacramento and the California Channel, I am pleased to invite you to take part in this year's stimulating curriculum.

Last year was an extraordinary year for LegiSchool. The Project received The Civil Mind Award, which is given to outstanding organizations and programs that energize civic involvement and enhance public education about democracy. We witnessed exhilarating debates on issues such as low voter participation, advertising at schools, school safety and religion at public schools. Our press conference in March honored the winners of the journalism contest as they dazzled the cameras with their intelligent assessments of the High School Exit Exam.

This year LegiSchool is preparing to conduct Town Hall Meetings on the juvenile justice system, the health and safety issues related to student backpacks, standards based education, and the always controversial issue of gun control. High school students have traveled from all ends of the state to participate in this dynamic learning experience. I hope this trend will continue as we head into the new season by working together to mold tomorrow's leaders.

Peace and Friendship,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John L. Burton".

John L. Burton

California State Senate President pro Tempore



**Real Issues,  
Real Debate,  
Real Curriculum**

## Free Video Offers

**New!** **A Day in the Life of a Candidate**  
During an election, citizens are bombarded with campaign literature and media coverage of candidates, but running for public office takes much more than slick mailers and TV commercials. This video demonstrates some of the

**"I was very grateful to get the opportunity to witness first hand the legislative process, hear the opinions of our state leaders in matters affecting all of California's students, and, most of all, being able to offer a student voice where it is most needed."**  
— Student, Rancho Bernardo High School

more routine, but critical work that goes into running for public office. Approximately 35 minutes in length, the video features the Republican and Democratic candidates for the November 2000 race for California's 5<sup>th</sup> Senate District. Two high school students serve as the video's hosts as they take viewers through the last four weeks leading up to the election. Highlights of the video include footage from campaign-related activities such as precinct walking, phone banking, community engagements, staff briefings, interviews with both candidates, and election night coverage.

### **A Day in the Life of the Secretary of State**

Have you ever wondered what California's Secretary of State does? Grace Pak, a student from Sacramento, recently spent a day with Secretary of State Bill Jones to get the answer for us. Approximately 25 minutes in length, the video highlights some of the key aspects of the job, including the Secretary's role as chief elections officer, member of the World Trade Commission, and overseer of the state archives.

### **A Day in the Life of the Legislature**

This 30-minute video features two key members of the Legislature, Senator Jim Brulte and Assembly Member Robert Hertzberg. Highlights of the video include footage from a Senate floor session, an Assembly committee hearing, a meeting between Senator Brulte and a group of lobbyists, and a staff briefing with Assembly Member Hertzberg.

**"Thank you for giving us the opportunity of a lifetime. Our experience at the Capitol was an incredible!"**  
— Students, Belmont High School, Los Angeles

**New!** **The Initiative Process**

This 8 1/2 minute video takes a fun, informative and step-by-step look at the initiative process and provides a strong message of civic involvement and personal empowerment. Daylight savings time and the banning of nuclear power plants are just two of the examples pro-

vided which illustrate the power of this important political tool of the people. Thomas Jefferson stated that "there is no safer depository of the ultimate power of society but the people themselves" - a frank recognition of the important role the initiative process plays in making law and placing the public in power to set this state's political agenda.

**Checks & Balances: The Three Branches of State Government**

**Emmy Award-Winning!**  
This ten-minute video is geared towards helping middle and high school students learn more about how our state legislative process works—and is presented in a way that is enjoyable for everyone. The main premise for the lesson is that, as in the federal government, the framers of our state's constitution wanted to be sure that no one branch of government would have too much power, so they divided the powers of the government into three equal branches.

### **How a Bill Becomes Law**

Produced by the California Channel, this ten-and-a-half-minute video uses AB 2268, the Bicycle Helmet Law, to describe how a bill becomes law in California. Ideal for high school students, the video introduces concepts such as how a bill is authored, the process of first, second, and third readings, and how legislation is assigned to various committees within the Legislature.

**To order free videos, please complete and return the Video Order Form.**

## The LegiSchool Project

*continued from front page*

winning civic education project. The mission of the project is to cultivate interest in the political process by creating opportunities for high school students to participate in debates concerning the problems affecting Californians. LegiSchool's approach to teaching government focuses on real issues... issues that impact all of

## Video Order Form

Indicate below which video(s) you would like:

- A Day in the Life of a Candidate
- A Day in the Life of the Secretary of State
- A Day in the Life of the Legislature
- The Initiative Process
- Checks & Balances: The Three Branches of State Government
- How a Bill Becomes Law

### **Mail to:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/St/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Return by mail, fax or e-mail to:**

California State University, Sacramento  
The Center for California Studies/LegiSchool  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819-6081

Fax: (916) 278-5199

Or e-mail your request to: [legischool@csus.edu](mailto:legischool@csus.edu)

*Your order will be mailed to you within 2-3 weeks. Thank you!*

us, including young people. By addressing issues directly affecting students, LegiSchool activities and materials increase students' interest in public policy.

Plans for the 2001/02 school year are guaranteed to be just as controversial, thought-provoking and engaging to students. Please join us as we discuss issues surrounding California's juvenile justice system; the impact of standards-based curriculum on classes such as PE, art and science; gun control; the elimination of lockers at many schools; and the state's increasing emphasis on, and use of, testing.

It is estimated that 12,000 California high school students take part in LegiSchool activities each year either through direct participation at Town Hall Meetings, via television on the California Channel, or by free videotapes and curriculum materials provided to teachers. To learn how you can involve your students in one of our LegiSchool activities, contact the Project at (916) 278-6906 or email LegiSchool at [legischool@csus.edu](mailto:legischool@csus.edu). You can also learn more about LegiSchool's exciting plans for the 2001/2002 school year at [www.csus.edu/calst/legischool.htm](http://www.csus.edu/calst/legischool.htm). See you at the Capitol!

*Kolleen Ostgaard, LegiSchool Project Director*



## 2001 - 2002 LegiSchool Calendar of Events

Mark your calendars now for this year's LegiSchool Town Hall Meetings! All meetings will take place at the State Capitol. If you are interested in attending one of the meetings with your class, contact the LegiSchool Project. A limited amount of travel money is available to classes. Call for more information.

**October 25, 2001, Town Hall Meeting, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.**

### **Trying Minors as Adults: Does the Punishment Fit the Crime?**

In March 2000, California voters passed Proposition 21 giving prosecutors discretion to charge youths between 14 and 17 as adults for certain offenses. The California Supreme Court is currently reviewing the constitutionality of Prop. 21. Many other states have similar policies in place. At a time when juvenile crime is actually decreasing, is this the best way to punish young people or have policymakers and voters overreacted? If found constitutional, are certain population groups more likely to be subject to Prop. 21 than others and how far should our society go in holding minors accountable for crimes?

**December 6, 2001, Town Hall Meeting, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.**

### **Standards-based Education: The Changing Priorities of Schools**

As schools continue on the path towards education reform, more and more emphasis is being placed on standards and testing, while schools allot less time for classes deemed less important. At the same time, declining school budgets over the past two decades have forced schools to make tough decisions about classes such as art, music and physical education. Who pays the price when students' educations become so narrowly focused? How important are the arts, science and PE to students and do such classes enhance one's education or detract from more "important" coursework?

**January 14, 2002, Essay Contest Deadline**

See back page for contest details.

**January 31, 2002, Town Hall Meeting, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.**

### **Backpacks at School: Convenience vs. Controversy**

Citing safety and budgetary issues, many high schools have eliminated the use of lockers and students have been left to rely on backpacks to store books and other school supplies. But concern is arising over the weight of backpacks and the potential to cause health-related problems to students. Why have so many schools made the decision to do away with lockers and at what cost does it come to students' health? Can we put a price on health or should health concerns take priority over safety and cost concerns?

**March 21, 2002, Student Run Press Conference,  
11:00 a.m. – noon**

### **Testing One, Two, Three: Is Testing in California Pushing Students Too Far?**

Responding to public demand for education reform, policymakers in recent years have pushed to increase education standards and expectations. One way to accomplish this goal is through increased testing. SAT 9, the High School Exit Exam, SAT I and SAT II, Golden State Exams...the list of standardized tests required of, and offered to, California's students goes on and on. But at what cost are schools administering the tests? At what point have students been tested as much as they can bear? Or, is standardized testing necessary to ensure that students obtain the best possible education? Should schools place more emphasis on coursework and extra curricular activities and less emphasis on how well students can perform on tests?

**May 2, 2002, Town Hall Meeting, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.**

### **Gun Control vs. Gun Rights: Teenagers Speak Out!**

In recent years, California lawmakers have taken steps to decrease gun violence by implementing a number of laws making it more difficult to purchase and own certain types of guns. Proponents of gun control argue that such actions make the state a safer place to live while opponents of gun control disagree and cite their constitutional rights to bear arms. Have lawmakers implemented too many gun control laws? Are our communities really any safer? Who's right and who's wrong?

# Exciting Opportunities!

Fall 2001

## Mock Trial and Moot Court Competition

We are pleased to announce the 23rd Annual Gordon D. Schaber Mock Trial and Moot Court Competition. This year's competition is scheduled for the week of February 9, 2002 at the Sacramento County Courthouse. The preliminaries will be held the week prior. The competition is administered and coordinated by the Center for Youth Citizenship, in conjunction with the:

- Sacramento Law Foundation;
- Sacramento County Bar Association;
- Sacramento County Office of Education;
- Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento;
- Sacramento Area Firms and Legal Organizations; and
- Sacramento Area Schools and Districts.

The statewide competition provides an opportunity for students and teachers to participate in an exciting learning experience, which is open to all high schools. Students learn how to work as a team, organize their thoughts and develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Schools from El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, and Yolo Counties are invited to participate in the regional event in Sacramento. For more information about regional

competitions outside this five-county area, contact the Constitutional Rights Foundation at (213) 316-2128.

Each moot court and mock trial team is matched with an attorney-coach who will work with the teacher and students to prepare their arguments for the cases. Debate teams will only need a teacher-coach to participate. All background information and the rules for the competition will be provided for the teams. School representatives will receive the above-mentioned materials at a mandatory meeting, which will be announced soon.

For more information contact the Center for Youth Citizenship at (916) 228-2322. Information is also available at [www.youthcitizenship.org](http://www.youthcitizenship.org) or e-mail us at [cyc@scoe.net](mailto:cyc@scoe.net).

## Wells Fargo and Community College Foundation eBus Program

In an effort to help bridge the digital divide, Wells Fargo and the Community College Foundation have teamed up to provide computer training and Internet access to underserved areas through the eBus Program. Formerly transit buses, eBus1 (Los Angeles), eBus2 (Northern California) and eBus3 (Bay Area), are transformed mobile technology labs complete with multimedia computers and satellite Internet access.

The eBuses go to schools, churches, youth and senior centers. Trainers on board demonstrate how computing and communication technology can create new opportunities for both young and old alike. The youth program focuses heavily on school applications and homework assistance. The training program for seniors includes basic computer skills, e-mail and health services on the Internet. Adults learn how to expand their computing skills for job or career

advancement by using the Internet for job searches, English-language skills and basic computer skills.

For more information or to schedule an eBus visit for your organization, call the Community College Foundation at (916) 418-5100.

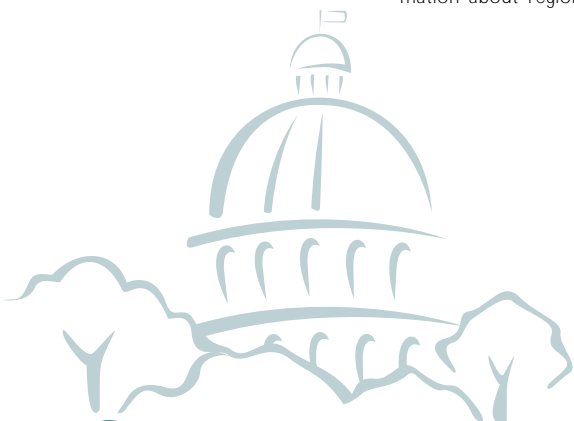
## Easy Reading Voter Guide—Order Soon for the March 2001 Primary Election!

The Easy Reading Voter Guide will be available this February on-line at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org) as well as in the 16-page booklet format. The non-partisan guide is popular with students, teachers and all types of voters because of its straightforward language, clear explanations and easy-to-follow layout. In 16 color-coded pages, the guide covers California's seven political parties, candidates for Governor and other statewide offices, and statewide ballot measures.

The guide is developed by the League of Women Voters, in partnership with the California Secretary of State's Office and the California State Library. The guide is available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese. Orders will be filled on a first come, first served basis. For ordering information visit our website or call (916) 442-7215.

## LegiSchool State Government for Beginners Handout Binder

Looking for good, basic handouts about state government and the legislative process? Then this binder is for you! Easy-to-duplicate handouts include legislative terminology; a diagram of the legislative process, along with a step-by-step description of the process; a sample bill with instructions on how to read legislation and much more! A binder will automatically be sent to anyone ordering this year's LegiSchool curriculum materials or contact LegiSchool for your free copy.



## A Teacher's Perspective on LegiSchool

It was my pleasure to have the opportunity to organize Castro Valley High School's participation in two of LegiSchool's Town Hall Meetings during the 2000-2001 school year. Early in the fall, I received the LegiSchool newsletter with dates and topics of the year's meetings. With the aide of some funding provided by LegiSchool to help cover transportation costs, I quickly made the arrangements to bring my government students to the Capitol.

The topic of the first meeting we attended focused on the influence of advertising in schools and the nutritional ramifications of exclusive purveyor contracts. The second meeting focused on the guidelines regarding religion in public schools. Both were topics that were relative to the lives of my students, and thus were topics which they found interesting. The LegiSchool Project provided us with curriculum guides that had extensive background information on the subjects. Summaries of the Educational Code regarding the topics, related legislation, recent

newspaper articles, and editorials that offered various perspectives on the topics were included, as well as critical thinking questions which were very useful in preparing the students for the meeting.

Once we arrived at the Capitol, the students were ushered into one of the hearing rooms. Many were in awe just to be in the stately and elegantly appointed rooms. They quickly focused their attention on the panelists, which included two of their classmates (who had received extra preparation materials from LegiSchool), legislators, and others involved in making public policy. The panelists, with the help of a moderator, engaged in an organized discussion based on questions prepared by the student panelists. After a short amount of time left for questions from the audience, the meeting officially concluded.

I had the opportunity to debrief the students before we left the room, and experienced one

of the liveliest discussions ever. My students were charged with energy as they commented on the panelists' responses in comparison to their own opinions. I am sure that this enthusiasm resulted from actually witnessing "real government people" (as one of my students said) discuss the issues about which they had studied in the curriculum guide.

Participation in the LegiSchool Town Hall Meetings was one of the most powerful lessons my students experienced last year, and I look forward to seeing next year's topics and continuing my relationship with the program.

—Carmelina Frasca,  
Castro Valley High  
School

**"My students and I have found our experiences in Sacramento as guests of the project to have been one of the highlights of the school year. Students have commented to me that they have a new appreciation for the complexity of our democracy and a new excitement about the potential of government to change people's lives."**  
—Marilyn Lubarsky, History-Social Science teacher,  
Upland High School

## LegiSchool and State History/Social Science Content Standards

### History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools Grade Twelve: Principles of American Democracy and Economics

California's Grade 12 History-Social Science standards pay particular attention to the principles of American democracy, which are intended to provide students with the knowledge and skills that are required to assume the responsibilities of citizenship.

Topics addressed at LegiSchool meetings and in LegiSchool curriculum materials have been aligned with many of the social studies standards now required by the state. Below are just a few of the standards that can be met through the use of LegiSchool and its curriculum materials. By using LegiSchool materials, students are given the opportunity to:

- Compare the present with the past, evaluating the consequences of past events and decisions and determining the lessons learned from such events;
- Explore the meaning and importance of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the legal obligations of obeying the law;
- Investigate how public policy is formed, including the setting of the public agenda and how it is carried out through regulations and executive orders;
- Examine the obligation of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service;
- Identify the reciprocity between rights and obligations (i.e., why enjoyment of one's rights entails respect for the rights of others);
- Research how a civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, and political purposes;
- Investigate the means that citizens use to participate in the political process (i.e., voting, campaigning, lobbying, running for political office);
- Explain how our society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections; and
- Articulate the process of lawmaking.

For a complete list of the standards, visit the Department of Education's website at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/board/pdf/history.pdf>

Since its inception in 1994:

- 97 classes from around the state have attended LegiSchool meetings.
- 20 Senators and 23 Assembly members have participated at Town Hall Meetings and Student-Run Press Conferences, along with 15 state policy makers including State Attorney General Bill Lockyer and former Secretary for Education Gary Hart.
- Over 30,000 California high school students have used LegiSchool curriculum materials.



**"Civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos."** —George W. Bush

**"As citizens of this democracy, you are the rulers and the ruled, the lawgivers and the law-abiding, the beginning and the end."**  
—Adlai Stevenson

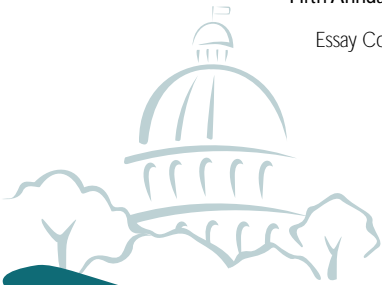
# THE LegiSchool PROJECT

## LegiSchool's Fifth Annual Essay Contest

### Testing One, Two, Three ...

SAT 9, the High School Exit Exam, SAT I and SAT II, Golden State Exams... the list of standardized tests required of, and offered to, California's students goes on and on. But at what cost are schools administering the tests? At what point have students been tested as much as they can bear? Or, is standardized testing necessary to ensure that students obtain the best possible education? This year's essay contest will ask students to ponder these questions and think critically about the need for so many tests. Ten winning essayists will be invited to spend a day in Sacramento at LegiSchool's Fifth Annual Student Journalism Summit on March 21, 2002.

Essay Contest details will be mailed in late October!



### For more information about LegiSchool, contact:

California State University, Sacramento  
Center for California Studies/LegiSchool  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819-6081  
(916) 278-6906  
legischool@csus.edu

Visit LegiSchool on the Internet at:  
[www.csus.edu/calst/legischool.htm](http://www.csus.edu/calst/legischool.htm)

### Your feedback is important to us!

#### Tell us what you think...

If you have an idea for a future Town Hall Meeting, suggestions on how to improve LegiSchool, or want to share a story about a successful civic education program in your community, please contact Kolleen Ostgaard at the Center for California Studies.

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