

# THE LegiSchool

Fall 2005

PROJECT



## The LegiSchool Project

As the LegiSchool Project enters its second decade of service to California's educators and young people, we are both enthusiastic about the wonderful and exciting opportunities the project makes available to teachers and students and yet concerned about the public's pessimism towards government leaders. It is the goal of LegiSchool to introduce state government to young people in a positive way, highlighting some of the issues that are being addressed at the state level that potentially impact the lives of youth. In doing so, we hope to engage students in the very discussions that state leaders have on myriad public policies and to motivate young people to take action, be involved in their communities and, above all, become engaged citizens in our democracy.

This year's meetings offer timely and engaging topics for students and teachers alike. From high school reform to issues surrounding gang violence to student privacy issues, the lineup of 2005/06 Town Hall Meetings promises to spark debate and dialogue.

LegiSchool is all about engaging students in the same debates that California's policy makers are engaged in. **Learning by doing** is LegiSchool's philosophy on getting high school students interested in the politics that impact so much of what goes on in their everyday lives. LegiSchool Town Hall Meetings offer students the chance to meet directly with state leaders to share their thoughts and concerns on actual legislation as it works its way through the legislative process. LegiSchool's meetings and curriculum materials are developed not only to engage students in public policy debates that are taking place everyday at the Capitol, but also to heighten students' awareness about state government, how it works and the importance of civic involvement as a means to improve the society in which we live. Detailed meeting information can be found in the Calendar of Events section of this newsletter.

In addition to our Town Hall Meetings, LegiSchool, in conjunction with the California Channel, offers free, government-oriented classroom materials to help students learn about the basic functions of state government. Whether it's a Town Hall Meeting videotape you're using in the classroom or curriculum materials on the budget process, LegiSchool materials are easily incorporated into the states' social science and history content standards.

By making government relevant to young people, it is LegiSchool's goal to help lay the groundwork for their on-going commitment to civic life. Read on to learn how you can involve your students in one of LegiSchool's meetings or to order LegiSchool's free classroom materials.

## Thank You...

The LegiSchool Project wishes to thank the following legislators for their participation in 2004/2005 LegiSchool meetings: Assembly Members John J. Benoit, Jackie Goldberg, Audra Strickland and Leland Yee.

Additional thanks to the following policy makers and community leaders for their participation: Alexander De Campo, California Young Democrats; Ryan Eisberg, Senate Republican Caucus; Mary Kirlin, Sacramento State; Chris Orrrock, Young Republican Federation of Sacramento Valley; Darren Schwartz, Office of Senator Vasconcellos; Michael Wagaman, Office of the Secretary of State.

## Dear Friends,

Welcome to another exciting year of LegiSchool Project activities! On behalf of the Project team—the California State Legislature, California State University, Sacramento, and the California Channel—I am pleased to invite you to participate in this year's informative and engaging programs.

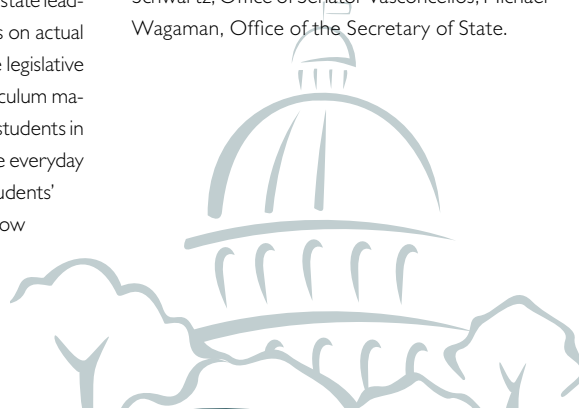
LegiSchool has a stimulating year planned. We are pleased to announce that our first meeting in October will take place at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. The topic will be gang activity in California. In other sessions we hope to captivate and challenge our audiences with discussions concerning the reform of California high schools, legislation on new teenage driving laws, and student privacy with its impact on their civil liberties.

We hope you will participate by helping bring LegiSchool, a dynamic learning experience, to the students who are our future leaders and the voters of this state. Counting on your enthusiasm and fresh ideas, I'm certain we can make this coming year LegiSchool's finest!

Sincerely,  
Greg Schmidt  
*Secretary of the Senate*

## Mission

The LegiSchool Project is a civic education collaboration between Sacramento State, and the California State Legislature, administered by the Center for California Studies. The Project's mission is to engage California's high school students in matters of public policy and state government by creating opportunities for students and state leaders to meet and share ideas on issues 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.



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

# Videos and Curriculum Materials

offered by the *LegiSchool Project* and the *California Channel*

Each video is accompanied by a **Video Viewing Guide**, which includes **two pages of critical thinking exercises and pertinent vocabulary for teachers to use as an assignment for students.**

New!

## Understanding California's Budget Process

With a budget of more than \$110 billion dollars, California ranks among the top ten economies in the world! Imagine the work that goes into preparing a budget of this magnitude...the entire process takes roughly one year. This 20-minute video examines California's budget process through the eyes of a family trying to balance their own bud-

get. Emphasis is placed on the many players involved in the process, the constitutional constraints that dictate how the money is spent and the compromise needed to pass the budget with a 2/3 majority in the legislature.

## The Lobbyist: The Power of Persuasion at Work

Commonly referred to as the *third house*, lobbying plays a significant role in the legislative process. This lively video provides students a thorough representation of what it takes to be a lobbyist in the state of California from tracking legislation to attending state legislative hearings to meeting with policy makers—all in an attempt to influence a particular outcome desired by their clients. The video provides students with the opportunity to learn about

the legislative process, while observing a lobbyist in action.

## The Voting Process: YOU Have the Power!

This energetic 8-minute video gives students a step-by-step look at procedures for voting in California. The goal of

the video is to give young, first time voters the knowledge and confidence to become involved in our most cherished constitutional right, the democratic process. Registration, absentee ballots, resources (websites, phones

numbers, etc.) and demonstrations of the three prevalent forms of voting systems in our state are given a thorough treatment.

## The Initiative Process

This 8 1/2 minute video takes a 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 provided 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 states political agenda.

LegiSchool...  
learning by doing.

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

This ten-minute video is geared towards helping students learn more about how our state legislative process works. 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.

## 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 more routine, but critical work that goes into running for public office and features the Republican and Democratic candidates for the November 2000 race for California's 5<sup>th</sup> Senate District. Highlights include footage from precinct walking, phone banking, 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? Approximately 25 minutes in length, the video examines 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.

## Other Materials

### 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
- a step-by-step description of the process
- a sample bill with instructions on how to read legislation
- voter registration and elections information
- useful state government and political websites and much more!

**"Thank you very much for providing these resources about California state government to teachers at no charge. As I'm sure you are aware, textbooks don't address state government specifically. These are invaluable resources for us, especially given our tight budgets!"**

**"The interaction with experts and politicians was impressive to my students. They loved it."**

**Teacher and Town Hall Meeting Participant**

# LegiSchool Events Response and Curriculum Materials Order Form

## Town Hall Meeting Materials

Packet includes free video tape and curriculum guide

### Gangs and California Culture

October 20, 2005, Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles

- Please consider my class for attendance at this meeting  
(Southern California schools only).
- We will view the meeting on video after the broadcast.

### Are California's High Schools Succeeding?

December 1, 2005, State Capitol, Sacramento

- Please consider my class for attendance at this meeting.
- We will view the meeting live on the California Channel.
- We will view the meeting on video after the broadcast.
- Please include my class in the online discussion following the meeting (complete details to follow soon).

### Students' Rights vs. Parents' Rights

February 9, 2006, State Capitol, Sacramento

- Please consider my class for attendance at this meeting.
- We will view the meeting live on the California Channel.
- We will view the meeting on video after the broadcast.

### Teens and Driving: Changing the Rules of the Road

- April 6, 2006, State Capitol, Sacramento
- We will view the meeting live on the California Channel.
  - We will view the meeting on video after the broadcast.

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## State Government Curriculum Videos

Packet includes free video tape and Video Viewing Guide including key terms and critical thinking questions

### Indicate below which materials you would like:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding California's Budget Process                 | <input type="checkbox"/> How a Bill Becomes Law                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Lobbyist: The Power of Persuasion at Work             | <input type="checkbox"/> A Day in the Life of a Candidate            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Voting Process: YOU Have the Power!                   | <input type="checkbox"/> A Day in the Life of the Secretary of State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Initiative Process                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> A Day in the Life of the Legislature        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Checks & Balances: The Three Branches of State Government |  |

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## State Government for Beginners handout binder

- FREE to California teachers and administrators
- \$10 per binder for non California teachers and administrators. Please send a check in the amount of \$10 payable to University Enterprises, Inc. to the address below.

## How to Order

### Mail order to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### Fax order to (916) 278-5199 (no cover sheet necessary) or send (with check if applicable) to:

LegiSchool  
California State University, Sacramento  
6000 J Street  
Sacramento, CA 95819-6081

You can also submit your order electronically from LegiSchool's website at: [www.csus.edu/legischool](http://www.csus.edu/legischool)



## 2005–2006 LegiSchool Calendar of Events

**M**ark your calendars now for this year's LegiSchool Town Hall Meetings! All meetings will take place at the State Capitol, with the exception of the October meeting, which will take place in Los Angeles. To find out how to participate in a meeting, please read on.

### Gangs and California Culture

**October 20, 2005, Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles**

In many California communities, gang membership and violence are part of everyday life. For many young people, gang life is a way of life. This meeting will examine the complicated social and cultural issues that lead young people into gangs. It will also address the effects that gangs have on our schools and the quality of life at schools where gangs are present. How can schools and our communities best deal with gangs and how do we prevent more young people from falling prey to gang membership? What actions have been taken by state policy makers to combat gang activity?

This meeting will take place at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. Participants will be drawn from the greater Los Angeles area.

### Are California's High Schools Succeeding?

**December 1, 2005**

High drop out rates, low test scores, overcrowded classrooms and young people ill-prepared for college and/or work are just some of the concerns being voiced about the state of California's public high schools. Policy makers and school officials are grappling with reform through initiatives such as the exit exam, increasing access to AP courses, and the creation of "small learning communities" designed to provide a more personal learning experience. Many California schools have adopted approaches that are geared towards work force preparation in careers such as health care, criminal justice, business and science. Is your school doing a good job at preparing its students for life beyond high school? Have any of the reform efforts mentioned above been implemented at your school? If so, how successful have those efforts been?

Following the Town Hall Meeting, this discussion will continue in the form of a statewide online dialogue with students, educators and policymakers. Anyone who has internet access will be able to participate in this exciting and innovative deliberation. If you and/or your students would like to be part of this, please indicate on the "Events Response Form."

### Students' Rights vs. Parents' Rights

**February 9, 2006**

Debate is growing over parental consent issues for teens who seek medical care during school hours. Some argue that young people

have the right to privacy when it comes to their own health care, while others argue that the right of parents to know what sort of medical care their kids are seeking supersedes a minor's right to privacy. Do schools have the right and/or responsibility to notify parents when their child is seeking health care during school hours? Do parents have the right to know what sort of medical care their child is getting? As a society, where do we draw the line between the rights of minors and parents?

### Teens and Driving: Changing the Rules of the Road

**April 6, 2006**

Recently enacted laws and current state legislation aim to make California roads safer by cracking down on inexperienced teenage drivers. From restrictions on cell phone use while driving to earlier curfews for young drivers to limitations on transporting passengers without adult supervision, lawmakers are responding to statistical data on accidents caused by teen drivers and increasing public concern over the safety of young people in the driver's seat. How effective would such measures be at improving the safety of our roads? Are young people being unfairly targeted? What is the best approach to teaching new drivers to be safe behind the wheel?

This meeting is part of LegiSchool's annual Student Legislative Summit and participants will be selected from LegiSchool's essay contest.

See reverse side for information on how to watch and/or order free curriculum materials for these meetings.

### How you and your students can attend a LegiSchool meeting...



LegiSchool frequently invites small groups of students from around California to participate in Town Hall Meetings. Limited travel money is available from LegiSchool for this purpose. If you are interested in bringing a group to attend a LegiSchool meeting and spend a day learning about the legislative process, please contact Kolleen Ostgaard at (916) 278-4642 or send an email to [ostgaard@csus.edu](mailto:ostgaard@csus.edu). If you are particularly interested in a specific meeting, please indicate so. If

an opportunity arises for you and your students, you will be contacted by LegiSchool staff.

Thank you for your interest in the LegiSchool Project.



# Incorporating LegiSchool into the State's History-Social Science Content Standards

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 cur-

riculum 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:

- 12.1.6 Understand that the Bill of Rights limits the powers of the federal and state governments;
- 12.2.1 Discuss the meaning and importance of each of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights and how each is secured;
- 12.2.3 Discuss the individual's legal obligations to obey the law;
- 12.2.4 Understand the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service;
- 12.3.1 Explain how civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes;
- 12.3.3 Discuss the historical role of religion and religious diversity;
- 12.4 Analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government as established by the U.S. Constitution;
- 12.4.3 Identify their current representatives in the legislative branch of the national government;
- 12.5.1 Understand the changing interpretations of the Bill of Rights over time, including interpretations of the basic freedoms articulated in the First Amendment and the due process and equal protection of the law clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment;
- 12.6 Students evaluate issues regarding campaigns for national, state, and local elective offices;
- 12.6.3 Evaluate the roles of polls, campaign advertising, and the controversies over campaign funding;
- 12.6.4 Describe the means that citizens use to participate in the political process;
- 12.7.5 Explain how public policy is formed, including the setting of the public agenda and implementation of it through regulations and executive orders;
- 12.7.6 Compare the processes of lawmaking at each of the three levels of government, including the role of lobbying and the media.

For a complete list of the standards, visit the Department of Education's website at: [www.cde.ca.gov/be/st](http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st)

## GETTING STUDENTS INVOLVED

### Simple Ideas for Engaging Students

- Offer extra credit to students who go to the polls with a parent on election day. Have students write a short essay on their impressions of the experience. Which system of voting was used? Were they surprised by anything they saw? What impressed them most about the voting process?
- Have students draw a cartoon depicting a political issue that is important to them.
- If the legislature is in session, have students identify a bill that their Senator or Assembly Member has authored and that is of concern to them. Have students research the bill by contacting the legislator's office and asking for the person who "staffed" the bill. Students should also be able to collect the bill's legislative history via the internet ([www.sen.ca.gov](http://www.sen.ca.gov) or [www.assembly.ca.gov](http://www.assembly.ca.gov)). Have students write a brief history on the bill, including what motivated the legislator to author it, what does the bill propose to do, who supports/opposes it and why, has the media responded to the bill and where does it stand in the legislative process?
- Have students write a letter to their legislators or local government representatives expressing an opinion on a public policy issue that is important to them. How many students receive responses back? Were students satisfied with the responses?
- Ask students to interview an elected representative and share the experience with class members. Students can "go local" and interview someone from their city council, school board or county board of supervisors or state representative (Senators and Assembly Members have district offices which might be more accessible to students than State Capitol offices).
- Have students analyze an editorial from a newspaper covering an issue that is being discussed in class. Have students summarize the editorial's position on that issue to the class and ask them to provide their own position and/or opinion on the issue.
- Have students identify common myths about government and politicians. Next, conduct a class brainstorming session citing positive examples of how government impacts and influences our lives.
- Ask students to identify and research an elected official who they admire and the changes that person has, or desires to bring about, in his/her community.
- Have students read up on California's three branches of government ([www.leginfo.ca.gov/califleg.html](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/califleg.html)) and then ask students to imagine that they are either a member of the legislature, governor of the state or a Supreme Court justice. Have students write down their reasons for selecting one particular branch and why they did not select one of the other two branches. Ask students to identify three public policy issues that they would want to address as a member of one of the three branches of government and explain why those issues are important to them.
- Discuss separation of powers and checks and balances with the class and explain how these principles impact how government functions. Examine the history of these principles and have students explain and provide examples of what can happen in a government that does not adhere to such principles.
- Ask students to identify how the various levels of government (local, state, federal) are responsible for providing different services to citizens (e.g., police service, education, health care, military, trash service, maintenance of roads and mail service). Next, ask students to identify a concern of theirs with each of the three levels and ask them to explain how they would go about contacting the appropriate government agency to bring attention to their concern.
- Have students identify their state representatives (Senator and Assembly Member). Explain legislative districts, redistricting, and term limits to the class. Ask students to visit their representatives' websites and identify 3-4 bills that the representatives have recently sponsored, explain what the bills propose to do, and have students explain their own opinions on each of the bills.

# THE LegiSchool PROJECT



## LegiSchool's Tenth Annual Essay Contest

### Teens and Driving: Changing the Rules of the Road

Recent and current state legislation aims to make California roads safer by cracking down on inexperienced teenage drivers. From restrictions on cell phone use while driving, to earlier curfews for young drivers, lawmakers are responding to statistical data on accidents caused by teen drivers and increasing public concern over the safety of young people at the driver's seat.

Students will be asked to share their opinions on these important issues. Ten winning essayists will be invited to spend a day in Sacramento at LegiSchool's Tenth Annual Student Legislative Summit on April 6, 2006. Look for essay contest details in early November!



LegiSchool...making government  
relevant to young people.

### 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.

### 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 the LegiSchool website:

[www.csus.edu/legischool](http://www.csus.edu/legischool)

—Eleanor Holmes Norton

The only way to make sure people you agree with  
can speak is to support the rights of people you  
don't agree with.

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