

# News Release



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## **New Partnership of the Foundation for the National Archives Promotes Constitutional Literacy**

*Marshall-Brennan Students Explore Constitution in Action in National Archives Boeing  
Learning Center*

Washington, D.C... November 23, 2009--This fall, students from public high schools in and near the nation's capital had the chance to explore the relevance of the U.S. Constitution in their lives through a hands-on Constitution-in-Action Lab. The Foundation for the National Archives brought students involved in a series of Constitution classes at their high schools to the Boeing Learning Center of the National Archives, where they were immersed in primary source records that detail how Constitutional rights play out in the lives of everyday Americans.

The Foundation for the National Archives and the National Archives partnered with American University Washington College of Law to provide the lab component for participants in the law school's distinguished Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project, which places second- and third-year law students in local high schools to teach students about Constitutional rights.

Forty-nine law school fellows are teaching 18 classes in ten District of Columbia schools and in two Montgomery County schools through the Marshall-Brennan project this academic year. As part of the for-credit classes, the high school participants learn about their Constitutional rights as students and as democratic citizens. They study key Supreme Court cases and the youth justice system, and they participate in moot court exercises and debates to develop critical thinking and rhetorical skills and refine their persuasive powers.

As part of the new partnership this academic year, selected participants took a field trip to the Boeing Learning Center for a Constitution-in-Action lab session. The Boeing Learning Center opened in 2007 at the National Archives flagship building in Washington, D.C. It serves as the headquarters for all National Archives educational outreach. As part of the two-hour lab session, the students assumed the roles of archivists and researchers using replicas of the National Archives "Stacks" and a "Reading Room."

The students' assignment was to provide the President of the United States with real-life examples of our Constitution in action for a new public information campaign. They found, selected and analyzed document facsimiles, mining these primary sources for historical examples of such political concepts as checks and balances and separation of powers.

“The Constitution-in-Action Lab gives our high school students a great way to think about how the Constitution affects both government and everyday life,” said Professor Jamin Raskin, director of the Law and Government Program at Washington College of Law. “We are really grateful to the Foundation for the National Archives for reaching out to both law students and high school students to create waves of learning in our community.”

“I cannot think of a more fitting way for students in the Marshall-Brennan Project to learn about the Constitution than to have a session in the Constitution-in-Action Lab,” said Ken Lore, president of the Foundation for the National Archives and a graduate of Washington College of Law. “I am especially pleased that we were able to share our resources with our friends at American University Washington College of Law. The lab experience not only enhanced the students' civic lessons, it also underscored for them the importance of having access to essential documentation for their rights as citizens and for accountability of the government.”

#### **About the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project**

Named for the late United States Supreme Court Justices Thurgood Marshall and William J. Brennan, Jr., the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Project at American University Washington College of Law mobilizes talented second- and third-year law students to teach courses on constitutional law and juvenile justice in public high schools in the District of Columbia and Maryland. Law students work with teachers, administrators, and lawyers to teach students their rights as citizens, the strategic benefits of voting, how lawmaking occurs, and other fundamental constitutional processes. This fall the classes are being taught in ten D.C. high schools and two in Maryland. The project was founded in 1999 by Professor Jamin Raskin, who also directs the Law and Government Program at Washington College of Law and is a Maryland state senator, and is directed by Maryam Ahranjani, a former Marshall-Brennan Fellow.

#### **About the Foundation for the National Archives**

Created in 1992, the Foundation for the National Archives is an independent nonprofit organization committed to increasing public awareness and appreciation of the National Archives as an essential resource in the American democracy. The Foundation serves as the private-sector partner of the National Archives in the creation of the *National Archives Experience*, a national civic literacy initiative which includes permanent exhibits, educational programs, traveling exhibits, special events and screenings, educational literature, and historical/records-related products and media. One of its proudest contributions to date is the Boeing Learning Center. The Foundation supports these activities by generating financial and creative support from individuals, foundations and corporations who share a belief in the importance of innovative civics education.

### **About the National Archives and Records Administration**

The National Archives and Records Administration is a Federal agency that serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our government, ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage. It supports democracy, promotes civic education, and facilitates historical understanding of our national experience. Every subject relating to American history is covered in the nine billion pages, the millions of photographs, maps and electronic records and the thousands of motion pictures and audio recordings that are available to the public at the National Archives nationwide. The National Archives maintains 20 regional records facilities and 12 Presidential libraries nationwide, as well as the Office of the Federal Register, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), and the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO).

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