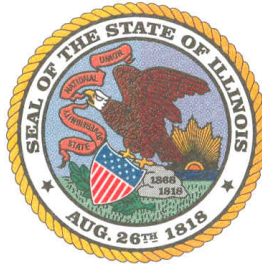


Eugene G. Doherty
Chief Judge



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March 11, 2021

For Immediate Release

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Press Release

**17th CIRCUIT COURT JUDGES
“VISIT” AREA CLASSROOMS**

(ROCKFORD, IL) – The Judges of the Seventeenth Circuit Court are “visiting” area classrooms. The Seventeenth Circuit’s Judicial Speakers Bureau has expanded its offerings this spring in response to the ongoing pandemic. The use of technology has permitted judges to speak to more students than ever before. Currently, judges have visited with 19 classes from 5 schools and visits are scheduled with an additional 28 classes.

Age-appropriate curricula, specific to the audience, introduce students to the judicial system and topics that encourage critical thinking. For grades K-5, each 30 minute program includes reading and discussion of a book from the *Page it Forward* series. A project of the [Illinois Judges Association](#), the reading program is designed to encourage the appreciation, value and enjoyment of reading. Judges dressed in their black robes visit with the classroom and read the book and discuss its intersection with history and the law. A copy of the book is donated to the classroom.

For students in grades 6-12, the American Bar Association’s annual Law Day theme is our chosen visit curriculum. Law Day is held on May 1st every year to celebrate the role of law in our society and to cultivate a deeper understanding of the legal profession. This year’s theme, “Advancing the Rule of Law Now,” introduces students to the bedrock of American rights and liberties.

Chief Judge Eugene Doherty stated, “The judicial system is something that people may one day need to interact with. Perhaps for a marriage, an adoption, a traffic ticket, or jury duty. This is one opportunity to introduce our young people to the role of the courts in preserving the rule of law and protecting individual rights.”

Ms. Brenda Lisitza, an elementary educator at Maria Montessori School shared, “The students are still talking about how they saw inside a courtroom and talked to a ‘real’ Judge. This is a wonderful program you have provided for our students. Thank you for connecting with our students and making such a positive impact! My students were engaged during the entire program and listened attentively to everything the Judge talked about. I feel it is important that students feel adults in the community care about them as people as well as their learning - then they are more likely to feel connected.”

The Judicial Speakers Bureau, a program of the Seventeenth Judicial Circuit, was established to help the community gain an understanding and knowledge of what can be a very complex legal system and the various programs in which the court is involved. The Judicial Speakers Bureau is comprised of judges who preside in both Boone County and Winnebago County.

The Seventeenth Circuit’s virtual classroom visits are available throughout the spring. Educators wishing to schedule a virtual visit with a judge should contact Kimberly Ackmann, Deputy Court Administrator at 815-319-4831 or kackmann@17thcircuit.illinoiscourts.gov.



Pictured: Hon. John T. Gibbons speaking with a group of students from his courtroom at the Winnebago County Courthouse.

The [Illinois Judges Association](#) is a membership organization of 1,250 active and retired judges whose purpose is to foster public confidence in the independence of the judiciary, provide services and education to its members, and information about court operations to the public. Funding for the books was made possible by a grant from the Illinois Judges Foundation.

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