

9 March 2023

Dear Representative Nosse,

I am writing today in support of the passage of HCR 18. As you know, civics education is fundamentally important to our democracy, and Classroom Law Project has been an integral part of providing engaging and experiential programs for 40 years. While I live in your district (thank you for your service!), I have been teaching social studies and English language arts for over 20 years at Portland Public School's West Sylvan Middle School. During that time, my colleagues and I have integrated most of CLP's programs into our teaching. In 7th grade, students learn about our judicial system through CLP's Courthouse Experience. They end their 7th grade year with a hands-on mock trial -- the same mock trial that Oregon high school students prepare for Oregon's Mock Trial competition. In my years of teaching, mock trial is hands down the most engaging classroom activity for middle school students. But it's not just engaging; no curriculum motivates students to closer reading or more succinct and powerful writing than preparing for a mock trial.

The culminating 8th grade activity, following a year's long focus on United States history and government, is CLP's We the People mock congressional hearings. You're likely familiar with the high school competition form of this program, but its middle school version is equally compelling and engaging. Our students work in unit teams, crafting a prepared response to their unit question and researching and practicing for the six minutes of questions that follow. During the actual hearings, students "testify" with their unit team to "legislators" about specific aspects of the U.S. Constitution – the ideas and history behind it, how and why the Framers wrote it, how it has been interpreted, and how it comes to life daily in current events. Each year, nearly 500 West Sylvan students benefit from CLP's programs. As teachers, we rely on their staff not only for the materials, but for answers to our and students' questions, and for our own professional development, both general (how do I teach a mock trial?) and specific (how do I teach my students to engage in civil discourse?)

Every day I teach, I find a reason to use and appreciate Classroom Law Project resources. I ask that you and the Oregon legislature do the same by giving HCR 18 a yes vote. Thank you for supporting civics education in Oregon.

Sincerely,
Karen Rouse

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