



Constitutional Rights  
Foundation

*Educating Tomorrow's Citizens*

## PRESS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

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### **UNIQUE ANIMATED WEBSITE DEVELOPED TO TEACH YOUTH ABOUT THE JUDICIAL BRANCH**

#### **Constitutional Rights Foundation and the Administrative Office of the Courts Partner to Launch Interactive Website as an Educational Tool**

**April 30, 2009....**Today marks the official launch of a unique website focused on educating California middle and high school students about the judicial branch of government and the courts. The **Judges, Courts and the Law Project** is a multi-faceted interactive web based resource that has been developed by the Judicial Council of California, the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Constitutional Rights Foundation in commemoration of Law Day which is being celebrated on May 1.

Of the three branches of government in our democracy, the judicial branch is perhaps the least understood and to young people it is almost invisible until one of them comes into contact with the courts – usually in some negative way. **Judges, Courts and the Law** is designed to help youth better understand the role of the judicial branch in our democracy. This unique site is about how courts interpret law and it's about the role of courts in protecting our rights to free speech, privacy, and much more.

**"The concepts of law, justice, and equality are fundamental to our nation's constitutional democracy,"** states Chief Justice of California Ronald M. George. **"This innovative project will help educate our students about the foundations of law, the idea of justice, respect for the dignity and rights of others, and the importance of the peaceful, legal resolution of conflicts."**

Students can access the website on their own or with a parent or teacher. A prominently featured component of the site is **Courts in the Classroom**, which provides a lively introduction to key legal principles. There are four major components to **Courts in the Classroom**, all of which are designed around animated cartoon characters that demonstrate major tenets of the judiciary system and how the courts interpret key issues that are critical to today's youth such as wearing message driven t-shirts to school or having a backpack searched.

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1. **The Big Ideas:** Deals with issues such as privacy, free expression, symbolic speech, censorship, courts, due process, laws, checks and balances – everything from the issue of graffiti to the publication of a student newspaper to the definition of the various types of courts.
2. **The Third Branch:** Teaches about Judges and what Judges actually do and explains in detail the California court system from a statewide map to the distinction between civil and criminal cases.
3. **Landmark Cases:** Focuses on the First Amendment, Fourth Amendment, Fourteenth Amendment highlighting major cases that set the standard on issues relevant to today’s students – dress codes and protesting on school campus among others.
4. **Quiz Yourself:** Tests students’ newfound knowledge of the issues, the courts and the process by allowing students to click on various questions and receive pop up answers.

In addition to the student activities being offered on the site, there is a professional development component for teachers that includes an online and a printable teacher resource guide discussing how to navigate and understand the site along with additional sources for teachers on the judiciary and related civic education issues.

**“Constitutional Rights Foundation has always advocated for collaborative and innovative approaches to teaching civics and this project will extend the reach of traditional programs, as well as provide new tools and content for teaching about the third branch of government,” states Jonathan Estrin, President, Constitutional Rights Foundation**

For more information about the **Judges, Courts and the Law** or **Courts in the Classroom**, please go to [www.courtsed.org/courts-in-the-classroom](http://www.courtsed.org/courts-in-the-classroom).

Constitutional Rights Foundation seeks to instill in our nation’s youth a deeper understanding of citizenship through values expressed in our Constitution and its Bill of Rights. CRF is dedicated to assuring our country’s future by investing in our youth today. For more information, please refer to [www.crf-usa.org](http://www.crf-usa.org).

The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.