



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

Administrative Office
1900 Kanawha Blvd., East
Bldg. 1, Room E-316
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
(304) 340-2305 Jennifer Bundy
(304) 340-2306 April Harless
(304) 558-4219 / TTY
(304) 558-1212 / FAX
Web Site: <http://www.state.wv.us/wvsca>
Information Services Division
Email: Jennifer.bundy@courtwv.gov
Email: April.harless@courtsww.gov

LAWS 2010 cancelled due to high number of snow days

For immediate release Wednesday, February 24, 2010

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The LAWS program that had been scheduled for March 30 in Moundsville has been cancelled due to the high number of school days missed this year because of snow in the Northern Panhandle, Supreme Court Chief Justice Robin Jean Davis announced today.

LAWS (Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students) will be held in Moundsville in spring 2011. High school and college students from the Second Judicial Circuit, which includes Marshall, Tyler, and Wetzel Counties, will once again be invited. A new date will be set in the fall.

The Court postponed the visit at the request of school officials in Marshall and Wetzel Counties.

State Schools Superintendent Steve Paine also has sent a memo to county school superintendents informing them that all professional development activities sponsored by the state Department of Education and Regional Education Service Agencies are being cancelled for the remainder of the school year, to give students more time in their classrooms. Dr. Paine recommended that county superintendents re-examine their own county schedules to maximize instructional time.

“The Court regrets that we will not be able to hold the LAWS program this year. Although our program provides a unique educational opportunity for the students who participate, so many have missed so much instructional time this year due to snow days that we agree students now need to spend the maximum amount of time possible in their classrooms,” Chief Justice Davis said.

“My fellow Justices and I look forward to coming to the Second Judicial Circuit next year,” Chief Justice Davis said.

“It’s certainly quite an honor to have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the students of Marshall, Wetzel, and Tyler Counties,” said Second Judicial Circuit Judge David W. Hummel, Jr. “First and foremost is the education of the children. While this is an educational opportunity, certainly paramount is their education in the schools themselves.”

Students in Tyler County have missed thirteen days of school due to snow and the swine flu this academic year, Wetzel County students have missed fourteen days, and Marshall County students have missed fifteen days, according to county school administrators.

(MORE)

“While we do believe the Supreme Court program is very worthwhile, at the same time, due to the very large number of snow days we have had and may have, it is good that this activity has been postponed to allow more instructional time for students,” said Wetzel County Assistant Superintendent Jay Yeager.

“It is a regrettable circumstance because a great deal of time was spent planning this event,” said Marshall County Superintendent Fred Renzella. “Our relationship with the Court has been exceptional.

“This kind of event adds relevance to what we teach in the classroom. It’s more than a field trip,” Superintendent Renzella said. “It is a huge loss. But fifteen days of school is almost a month of school.”

With the accountability that is placed on schools and students to perform well on standardized tests, taking more time away from the classroom “just wouldn’t be wise,” he said.

LAWS is a partnership between the court system, schools, the Bar, and the community. LAWS teaches students about the Judicial Branch of government. Chief Justice Davis began the program when she was Chief Justice in 1999. Since then more than 4,200 high school and college students in twenty-two counties have participated.

Traditionally, teachers attend a training session with Supreme Court personnel and local circuit judges, which had been scheduled for February 26. At that session, teachers receive information about the state and federal court systems, suggested exercises for students, and summaries of the real Supreme Court cases their classes will hear arguments in. Later, volunteer attorneys from the area meet with students to discuss the court system and the cases.

On the day of LAWS, students hear arguments in the case they have studied and then meet with the attorneys who argued that case in a "debriefing" session. The attorneys and students also have an informal lunch with the Supreme Court Justices.

The Supreme Court held the first LAWS program in Beckley in 1999. Other LAWS programs have been held in Clarksburg, Huntington, Wheeling, Summersville, Martinsburg, Parkersburg, Charleston, Romney, Princeton, and Lewisburg.

##