



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Students, teachers learn as Supreme Court hears cases in Point Pleasant

For immediate release

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POINT PLEASANT, W.Va. – Students from Wahama, Hannan and Point Pleasant High Schools got to see the Supreme Court grill attorneys in person on Tuesday as the Court heard three cases on a Rule 19 Argument Docket in the Circuit Courtroom of the Mason County Courthouse in Point Pleasant.

The Court was in Mason County for the LAWS (Legal Advancement for West Virginia Students) program. LAWS is a partnership between the court system, schools, the Bar, and the community that teaches students about the Judicial Branch of government.

Hannan High School students Cody Strickland and Issac Tincher said they thought it was a great opportunity and experience. “I want to be a lawyer,” Tincher said. “This week,” a group of friends quickly chimed in.

Tincher, Strickland, Cassandra Meadows and Samantha Whitt said they were surprised at how quick-witted the attorneys had to be, and how quickly they had to be ready to change from one argument to another to keep up with the Justices’ questions.

“You have to be confident,” Whitt said.

Hannan High School Teacher Valerie Wolford said LAWS was a good way to teach about the judicial system. “It gets them motivated. It’s thought-provoking for them. It’s not made up. It’s real world,” she said.

Point Pleasant High School Teacher Johnathan Mayne said the program was easy to integrate into both civics and AP government classes. “It was a very thorough application,” he said.

Point Pleasant High School students got into the nitty-gritty of search-and-seizure laws, especially those applying to a police dog sniffing around the outside of a car, when it was their turn to question attorneys. Ashtyn Wedge, for one, insisted a U.S. Supreme Court “is not common sense.”

Point Pleasant students Serena Holley and Kelsey Allbright said studying the case allowed them to learn a lot of new vocabulary words, “so many lawyer terms we didn’t know before we can now use in a sentence,” Holley said.

“But we can’t spell them,” Allbright added.

Holley and Allbright said they appreciated getting to see what happens to court cases after a trial, which is all they get to see on television.

Justice Robin Jean Davis began the LAWS program when she was Chief Justice in 1999. Since then, about 5,300 high school and college students in twenty-eight counties have participated, not including this year. 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, Lewisburg, Moundsville, Charles Town, Elkins, and Madison.

Teachers whose classes attended this year previously were invited to a training session with Supreme Court personnel. At that session, teachers received information about the state and federal court systems, suggested exercises for students, and summaries of the real Supreme Court cases their classes will hear. Later, volunteer attorneys from the area met with students to discuss the court system and the cases.

On the day of LAWS, students hear arguments in the case they have studied then meet with the attorneys who argued that case in a "debriefing" session in the courtroom.

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