

# Constitutionally Speaking

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## Welcome to our newsletter

Dear New Hampshire Educator,

**Constitutionally Speaking** is a New Hampshire organization that promotes civil dialogue and civics education. We understand that educators at all levels—elementary, middle, and high school—are key players in these efforts. We therefore are launching a new publication aimed specifically at New Hampshire educators in order to share useful lessons, relevant resources, and notices of upcoming civics-related events. We promise to contact you only when we have useful information to share. Please consider putting us in your email address book and passing this newsletter on to colleagues who might find it helpful.

Your colleague,

*Martha*

Martha Madsen, Ed.M.

Director, Educational Outreach and Curriculum

Constitutionally Speaking



## Constitutionally Speaking with Educators Justice Sandra Day O'Connor “The State of Democracy in America”



Courtesy:  
O'Connor House

Please join us at Concord's Capitol Center for the Arts on Constitution Day, September 17, 2014, for an evening with retired Supreme Court Justice **Sandra Day O'Connor**. Justice O'Connor will be introduced by retired Justice and New Hampshire native David H. Souter, and will discuss “The State of Democracy in America.” You and your students may pre-register for this special event! Please [click here if you would like to pre-register](#).

Since retiring from the Supreme Court, Justice O'Connor has championed civics

education. She has launched [iCivics.org](http://iCivics.org), an online civics education venture aimed at middle school students. Her non-partisan O'Connor House “ solves important social, economic and political problems through civil talk leading to civic action. “

Her numerous publications include:

"Finding Suzie" (for elementary school students), Illustrated by Tom Pohrt, Knopf Books for Young Readers (2009);

"Chico," illustrated by Dan Andreasen, Dutton Juvenile (2005). The Arizona Department of Education has kindly shared this [4th grade lesson, on "Chico."](#) with NH educators;

"Lazy B: Growing Up on a Cattle Ranch in the American Southwest" (for high school students), with H. Alan Day, Random House Trade Paperbacks (2003);

"The Majesty of the Law: Reflections of a Supreme Court Justice" (for high school students and social studies teachers), Random House Trade Paperbacks (2004).

This book includes an open letter to Justice O'Connor's granddaughter, Courtney, which states:

*A nation's success or failure in achieving democracy is judged in part by how well it responds to those at the bottom and the margins of the social order... The very problems that democratic change brings—social tension, heightened expectations, political unrest—are also strengths. Discord is a sign of progress afoot; unease is an indication that a society has let go of what it knows and is working out something better and new.*



## **Celebrate Law Day on May 1<sup>st</sup>** **“A Lawyer and Judge in Every School”** **Day on May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Please consider recognizing Law Day in your classrooms and schools on May 1st. The American Bar Association has considerable resources to assist you in your planning. The ABA's theme this year is **“Why Every Vote Matters,”** for grades k-12. Their website offers a planning guide in pdf form.

[http://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_education/initiatives\\_awards/law\\_day\\_2014/the-law-day-2014-planning-guide.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_education/initiatives_awards/law_day_2014/the-law-day-2014-planning-guide.html)

[www.lawday.org](http://www.lawday.org)

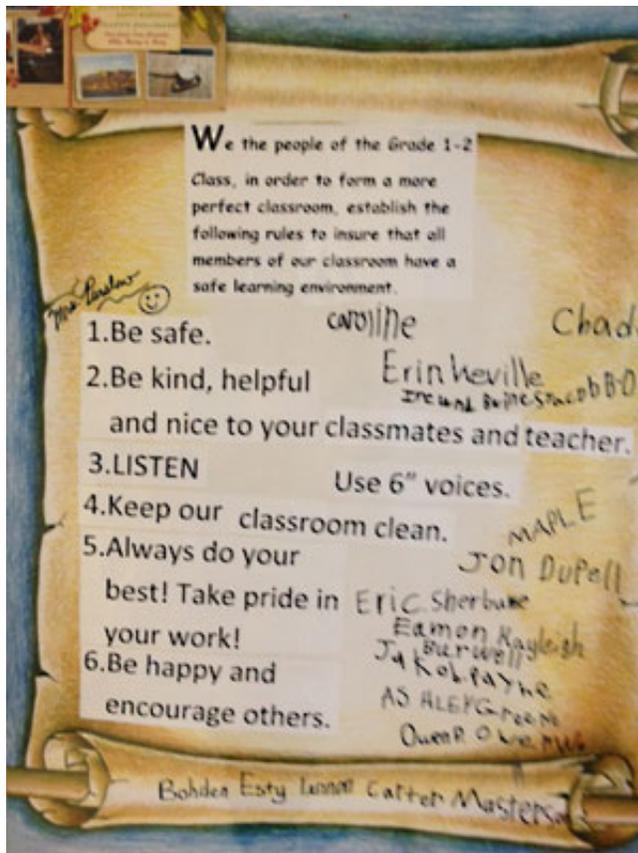
This year's featured topic for the NH Bar's "A Lawyer and Judge in Every School" is "**When Love Hurts: Teen Dating Violence**," appropriate for grades 8-12.

[www.nhbar.org/law-related-education/A-Lawyer-Judge-In-Every-School.asp](http://www.nhbar.org/law-related-education/A-Lawyer-Judge-In-Every-School.asp)

[www.nhbar.org/law-related-education/LawDay-Resources.asp](http://www.nhbar.org/law-related-education/LawDay-Resources.asp)



## Making Laws, the Constitution, and other Civics Concepts Understandable to Elementary School-Aged Students



Just as our forefathers documented their hopes and dreams for their new country (establishing justice, ensuring domestic tranquility), so our youngest students can document and share their own hopes and dreams for the coming school year. Once their dreams are put into words, then the teacher can ask the students, "What rules do we need to make sure that we all have a chance to make our hopes and dreams come true?" Brainstorming will begin, and when conversation concludes, a classroom will have its very own classroom constitution.

Some schools have gone beyond this powerful Responsive Classroom technique, and held school-wide Constitutional Conventions to establish school-wide rules.

<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/article/schoolwide-rules-creation>

Janet Dougherty of Garfield Elementary School in Springfield, VA, celebrates Constitution Day by connecting our country's Constitutional election rules with her school's student government. She has generously shared her PowerPoint presentation.

[Download PPT](#)   [Download PDF](#)

Garfield Elementary also holds a constitutional convention through which grade-wide rules are established. Representatives from each classroom meet to negotiate and agree on these rules.

You can download a PowerPoint presentation with photographs of this process.

[Download PPT](#) [Download PDF](#)

You can also download a PDF of the rules created: [Download PDF](#)



## Featured Lessons -- Democracy and Law

### Elementary School

"D is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet" by Elissa Grodin

Guide written by Cheryl K. Grinn

Published by Sleeping Bear Press, Chelsea, MI 48118

[http://sleepingbearpress.com/teaching\\_guides/30/](http://sleepingbearpress.com/teaching_guides/30/)

"House Mouse, Senate Mouse" by Peter W. Barnes

Students will be able to identify the steps a bill has to go through to become a law by comparing the real steps to the steps in the book.

<http://childrenslit->

[socialstudies.wikispaces.com/House+Mouse%2C+Senate+Mouse+Reinforcing+Activity%C2%A0](http://socialstudies.wikispaces.com/House+Mouse%2C+Senate+Mouse+Reinforcing+Activity%C2%A0)

School House Rock "I'm Just a Bill" song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFroMQIKiaq>

### Middle School

An iCivics online lesson: Making Laws

<https://www.icivics.org/node/592/resource>

A Kids in the House lesson on how laws are created.

<http://kids.clerk.house.gov/middle-school/lesson.html?intID=17>

Rock in the Classroom by Jerry Appell

"Capitol Hill" song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxqaTujVzXc>

If middle school teachers register on [the iCivics website](#), you can access three lessons on the topics "Who Rules," "Limiting Government," and "Rule of Law."

A middle-school level interview with Justice O'Connor

<http://www.timeforkids.com/news/chat-justice-sandra-day-oconnor/86351>

## High School

“Do Laws that Ban Offensive Words Make the World a Better Place?” The Learning Network:  
Teaching and Learning with the New York Times

<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/do-laws-that-ban-offensive-words-make-the-world-a-better-place/>

Resource from US House of Representatives describing process though which laws are made.

<http://kids.clerk.house.gov/high-school/lesson.html?intlD=17>

For more civics resources and lessons for all ages, visit our website:

<http://constitutionallyspeakingnh.org/resources.html>



**"We have a complex system of government. You have to teach it to every generation." – Sandra Day O'Connor**



*Constitutionally Speaking is a collaboration of The New Hampshire Humanities Council, The New Hampshire Institute for Civic Education, The New Hampshire Supreme Court Society, the Warren B. Rudman Center for Justice, Leadership & Public Policy, and St. Anselm Institute of Politics.*