



CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS FOUNDATION

EDUCATING TOMORROW'S CITIZENS

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LOS ANGELES AND LITHUANIAN STUDENTS STUDY DEMOCRACY IN ACTION VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

*Constitutional Rights Foundation Deliberating in a Democracy Program Reaches Across
Borders to Teach Civic Education*

LOS ANGELES, CA — November 18, 2008— The Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) has partnered with the Museum of Tolerance and the Center for Preservation of Democracy to launch a series of student conferences as part of CRF's Deliberating in a Democracy Program (DID). Today is the first of the conferences and includes 48 high school students from throughout Los Angeles County including the Unified School Districts of Glendale, LA and Montebello.

The goals of the conferences are threefold:

1. to provide students from both countries the opportunity to utilize newly acquired civic skills and knowledge gained through their participation in DID.
2. to connect students to each other and enhance their perspective through cultural and academic interactions via videoconference and face-to-face events.
3. To provide professional development to teachers who will learn new techniques for teaching civic education.

Today's unique conference will take place at the Museum of Tolerance. A portion of the conference will be dedicated to a digital videoconference between LA students at the Museum of Tolerance and Lithuanian students at the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius. Prior to the videoconference that begins at 8:15 a.m., Lithuanian students will learn about the US Embassy and its staff as well as what role the Embassy plays in Lithuania. After the videoconference, LA students and teachers will continue the day with a series of democracy lessons. Students will visit the Point of View Diner (an exhibit at the Museum about cyber bullying) and the Confronting Hate Exhibit (an exhibit about how technology plays an important role in promoting hate through the internet).

Following the museum visit, students will participate in a lively discussion focused on the question, "***Should our democracy allow schools to punish students for off-campus cyber bullying.***" Students will also discuss ways to address this issue back at their respective schools. Subsequent conferences with teachers and students from other schools will take place on December 9 and 11.

The LA based teachers participating in the conference have been a part of the DID project for 2-3 years. Each year, new students from the 10th, 11th and 12th grades are introduced to the DID program. Teachers and students hail from Glendale High School, Bell Gardens High School, Schurr High School and Franklin High School.

“I have been involved with “Deliberating in a Democracy” from its beginning and it has proven itself to be one of the best civic education programs I've encountered in my 35 years of teaching. The program could not have been more important this election year - helping to create a sense of making sense about issues...my students have developed into better listeners, less judgmental participants in our democracy, and have made strides in their ability to maintain an open mind,” says Stephen Anderson, a teacher at Schurr High School in Montebello

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools Awards, Deliberating in a Democracy is a major six year international initiative designed to improve student understanding of democratic principles and the skills of civic deliberation.

Deliberating in a Democracy’s overall goal is to increase the knowledge and ability of teachers and students to effectively participate in deliberations related to democratic principles as applied in their countries. The emphasis is on a direct person-to-person exchange of ideas and experiences to give people a much clearer picture of democracy in action. In 2007–2008 over 200 teachers engaged more than 5,000 secondary students in authentic civic deliberations across the United States and in Eastern Europe, Russia and Azerbaijan .

About CRF: Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) seeks to instill in our nation's youth a deeper understanding of citizenship through values expressed in our Constitution and its Bill of Rights and to educate young people to become active and responsible participants in our society. CRF is dedicated to assuring our country's future by investing in our youth today. For more information about CRF, visit www.crf-usa.org.

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