*Agenda for Distance-Learning or In-Person Class*

**50-Minute Civics:  The Bill of Rights in Your Life**

*The Anniversary of Signing of the Bill of Rights is December 15*

*However, Bill of Rights Day is Every Day*

**Overview of the Activity: What’s On Your Mind?**

This 50-minute activity includes showing a three-minute, thought-provoking video

[Students Sound Off About the Bill of Rights](http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/annual-observances/bill-rights-day). Supporting materials are ready for immediate use in the distance-learning space or in courtrooms or classrooms with no preparatory research or reading.

**An option to consider:** Contact a local chapter of the [Federal Bar Association](http://www.fedbar.org/Menu/Contact-Us.aspx) and request a lawyer to lead, or co-lead this activity with a federal judge.

A brief video stimulates students to think about an Amendment that has a significant impact on what is important to them. It is followed by a question-formation activity that sets the stage for students to get invested and involved in critical thinking and civil discussion. The activity can be facilitated by a teacher, a federal judge, or an attorney volunteer.

**Objectives**

1. To give students experience with the vital skills of 1) forming and asking questions, and 2) engaging in civil discussion on controversial issues with peers and adults.
2. To give students the experience of claiming their personal stake in the Bill of Rights and the role of the courts in protecting those rights.

**Program in a Nutshell**

* **Activity Duration:** 50 minutes
* **Location:**  Distance-Learning Space; Courtroom; Classroom
* **Participants:** High school students
* **Teacher/Student Preparation:** None
* **Judge/Lawyer Preparation:** 10 minutes reviewing the video and the guidance tips
* **Centerpiece:**  Three-Minute Video -- [Students Sound Off About the Bill of Rights](http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/annual-observances/bill-rights-day)
* **Question-Formulation Activity**

**Calendar Note:** December 15 is the anniversary of signing of the Bill of Rights; however, it is celebrated throughout the month and the Bill of Rights can be the focus of study throughout the year.

**In Advance of the Event: Distribute the Handouts.** Give participants a one-page list of the [Bill of Rights](http://www.ushistory.org/us/18a.asp). Because students are most likely to show interest in the [First Amendment](http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/about-educational-outreach/activity-resources/what-does) and [Fourth Amendment](http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/about-educational-outreach/activity-resources/what-does-0), two handouts focus on these two Amendments. Word clouds for the [First Amendment](http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/educational-activities/first-amendment-activities) and the [Fourth Amendment](http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/educational-activities/fourth-amendment-activities) are springboards for students’ questions.

*Agenda and Guidance for the Judge, or the Teacher, or a Volunteer Attorney*

**The Bill of Rights in Your Life: Students Sound Off**

*Video, Question Formulation, and Dialogue with a Federal Judge or Attorney Volunteer*

*(5 minutes)* **Judge Introduces Himself/Herself, the Court, the Importance of the Bill Rights, and Gives a Program Overview**

Introduction is your “heart reason” for choosing the law. Tell students that they will watch a brief video and have a guided conversation about it.

*(5 minutes)* **Video and Reflection**

After watching the video, participants have about two minutes of quiet time on their own to identify the Amendment that is most **meaningful to them personally.**

*(5 minutes)* **In Teams of Two**

* Using the list of the First Ten Amendments provided, students pair up with a classmate who has selected the same Amendment.
* Each pair underlines and discusses key phrases in their Amendment.
* Preparing for the Q/A part of the session, they make a list of questions about the Amendment that they want to ask the judge or attorney.

*(5 minutes)* **Brainstorm Questions in Pairs**.

Still working in pairs, students refer to the underlined phrases, then write down all of their questions about their Amendment. Each pair selects the top two or three questions and writes each one on a separate sticky note.

*(15 minutes)* **Facilitated** **Civil Discussion with the Entire Group*.***

The judge or lawyer asks each pair to identify its chosen Amendment as they post on a wall their separate sticky notes with their top three questions. After all of the notes are posted, the students come back to the large group.

The classroom teacher finds the three or four most frequently asked question(s) among the sticky notes and announces them to the judge and the group. The judge starts the conversation by asking the students one of the frequently asked questions. Students raise their questions verbally during the discussion.

*(10 minutes)*  **Open Floor for General Questions**

The judge/lawyer encourages questions about the courts, the law, careers in the legal field, and issues that are on the minds of the students.

*(5 minutes)* **Wrap Up**   
 Ask students to write on a sticky note one thing they learned or an impression that they will take away from their experience that will remind them of the importance of the Bill of Rights **in their own lives**. Ask students to share their insights with the large group and then post their sticky note on the wall.