



CALIFORNIA JUDGES ASSOCIATION

The Voice of the California Judiciary

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CALIFORNIA JUDGES ASSOCIATION HONORS THREE COUNTY SUPERIOR COURTS FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO YOUTH CIVICS ENGAGEMENT

SACRAMENTO (August 20, 2026): The California Judges Association (CJA) is honoring Superior Courts in three counties – Butte, Santa Clara, and Sutter – for their commitment to youth civics engagement in connection with CJA’s new Youth Civics Engagement Recognition Program (Program).

CJA’s Program is aligned with California Chief Justice Patricia Guerrero’s Power of Democracy initiative, which seeks “to inspire California courts to promote a greater public understanding of the three branches of government.” (<https://www.powerofdemocracyca.org/>) CJA’s Program is intended to recognize California courts that lead in judicial engagement in civics educational efforts directed to students in grades K-12. Specifically, each year, the Program (1) will recognize up to two Superior Courts that have the highest participation rates in youth civics engagement per judicial officer in the state; and (2) when justified, will recognize one Superior Court that has innovated in the area of youth civics engagement. Civics engagement activities recognized by the Program include Judges in the Classroom presentations; presentations that educate students regarding the three branches of government, the legal system, civic duties, constitutional rights, and courtroom roles and procedures; courthouse tours; pre-recorded educational videos; Teen Court proceedings; mock trials or moot court; and student mentoring programs focused on law, civics, government, or the justice system.

CJA accepted applications by June 1, 2026, for activities during the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. Ten counties of varying sizes submitted applications for the Program’s inaugural year. CJA’s Executive Board selected Butte and Santa Clara County Superior Courts to receive recognition for having the highest participation rates and Sutter County Superior Court for its innovative programming.

1. **Butte:** Out of 13 judicial officers in Butte County, 11 participated in the county’s youth civics education activities, including Judges in the Classroom, a “survival guide”

program for youth transitioning into adulthood, courthouse tours, mock trials, and student mentoring and leadership luncheons, for a total of 50 hours. These activities reached hundreds of students. In particular, the Judges in the Classroom program included 17 classroom visits by eight judicial officers and involved 465 students, 295 students received the presentation of “When You Turn 18: A Legal Survival Guide,” 90 students participated in mock trials, and 113 students participated in student mentoring and leadership luncheons.

2. **Santa Clara:** Out of 75 judicial officers in the county, more than half (41) participated in Judges in the Classroom (75 sessions), and nearly half (32 and 35, respectively) participated in 32 courthouse tours and 62 mock trials. In addition to those activities, the county offered a Teen Court program, student mentoring, and civics education programs, including a Constitution Month in September of 2025, a Law Day video contest, a Color of Justice Program, a Young Women’s Power Lunch, and a Read Across Santa Clara County program. In total, the judicial officers participated in nearly 340 hours of youth civics engagement activities.
3. **Sutter:** This small county of seven judicial officers presented two innovative programs: “Origins of the Jury Trial and its Importance” and “Fred Korematsu and His Fight Against Injustice.” Both programs helped to educate students about the history and importance of the American judicial system.

The “Origins of the Jury Trial and its Importance” interactive program educated students about jury trials, including the process, participants, and history, and the importance of jury service. Among other things, students learned about the Magna Carta, the Star Chamber, famous jurists and philosophers, and famous jury trials in England and the American Colonies. The students also learned about the right to a jury trial in the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, the 1774 Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress, and the 1775 Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms.

In honor of Asian History and Heritage Month, the county presented the “Fred Korematsu and His Fight Against Injustice” program, which was focused on the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II. The event included retired and sitting judicial officers, county Supervisors and other local government officials, Superintendents of the Yuba City Unified School District and Marysville Joint Unified School District, other dignitaries, community-based organizations, and many students, educators, and administrators. The program was co-sponsored by the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), which provided 100 pocket constitutions for the students. During the event, attendees heard from a 103-year-old individual about the individual’s experiences at the Tule Lake Internment Camp. In the second part of the program, ten local students and six judicial officers performed a short play about Fred Korematsu and his landmark U.S. Supreme Court case titled “Mr. Korematsu and His Fight Against Injustice.” The event taught participants about the Korematsu legal proceedings in an interactive manner and was recorded and played throughout the local schools.

“An independent and impartial judiciary depends in no small part on the public’s understanding of our system of government and the role courts play within it,” said the California Judges Association Executive Board. “The extraordinary work being done by the Superior Courts of Butte, Santa Clara, and Sutter Counties demonstrates what is possible when judicial officers step beyond the courtroom to engage directly with young people. Whether welcoming students into a courthouse, visiting a classroom, conducting a mock trial, or bringing history to life, these judges are helping the next generation understand not only how our justice system works, but why it matters. CJA is proud to recognize these courts and the judicial officers who are investing their time, creativity, and energy in the civic education of California’s youth.”

The California Judges Association has over 2300 members and is one of the largest organizations of judicial officers in the country. CJA is dedicated to promoting judicial excellence to achieve fair, impartial and equal justice for all through education, ethics, inclusivity, outreach and advocacy.

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