



Center for Education in Law and Democracy

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Civic Seminar Series for Colorado Teachers

The Center for Education in Law and Democracy proposes a Civic Seminar Series for Colorado teachers of civics and government. Colorado teachers have expressed interest in enhancing their disciplinary knowledge of government and law—disciplines that are often inadequately developed within teacher preparation programs. We hope to respond to this need through a structured program that will bring teachers into contact with experts on current topics that are of particular interest to them and their students. Furthermore, CELD is in a unique position to propose a seminar program because since its inception, many community groups have recognized that CELD represents an important voice for civic education in Colorado.

Research supported by the Center for Information and Research in Civic Learning at Tufts University has demonstrated that (1) teacher quality is the primary factor determining whether students receive quality civic learning experiences and (2) teacher professional development has a direct relationship to student learning in civics and government. Thus, we believe this Civic Seminar Series meets a local need and reflects what research has demonstrated will work in improving civic education. Teachers tell us that they need resources on current issues delivered in a timely fashion.

The proposed Civic Seminar Series will have these components:

1. Seminars for teachers. Each seminar will have a particular focus, such as, voting rights, direct vs. representative democracy, Fourth Amendment and technology, current issues involving checks and balances, as well as issues before the Colorado General Assembly. Topics will be chosen based on input from teachers, current events, and analysis of the Colorado social studies standards. Each seminar will open with a lecture presentation by a scholar with expertise in the topic, followed by Q & A. Teachers and CELD staff will consider how the information on the topic presented via the lecture and reading could be translated for the middle or high school classroom.

2. Preparation and distribution of materials. CELD staff will collaborate with scholars to prepare materials on the selected topics for teachers. These materials might include readings that could be used with students and directions for an interactive lesson that incorporates current thinking on the topic, as well as best practices in civic education. Funds are needed to enhance the CELD website to provide teachers with easy access to new resources.

3. Public events on topics of special interest. These public events will be open to students, teachers, and the general public who wish to discuss key issues with other members of the community. We anticipate that one of these programs, to be held in October 2012, will focus on one or more ballot issues in Colorado. CELD will provide interested teachers with material for introducing the ballot issue(s) to students. At the public event, experts on both sides of the issue will take part in a panel discussion, followed by Q & A. All attendees will have the opportunity to discuss the issue in small groups. The topic for spring will depend on teacher interest and events in the news. Each topic will also be the focus of one of the Civic Seminars, allowing teachers who take part in the seminars to take a leadership role, with CELD staff, in planning for and conducting the public events.

