

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT
COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF
VIRGINIA**

THIRD ANNUAL LAW DAY PROGRAM

**Voting and the Rights of
Convicted Felons – A Debate**

Voting and the Rights of Convicted Felons – A Debate

Approaching the 50th anniversaries of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Western District of Virginia brought together a group of high school students, several distinguished members of the judicial, educational, and legislative communities to participate in a lecture series and debate based on the 2014 theme of Law Day, America Democracy and the Rule of Law: Why Every Vote Matters.



- ▣ The recent interest in the repeal of laws that prohibit millions of felons from voting, created the focus of the series of three lectures designed to prepare students to participate in a debate, Pros and Cons - Restoring the Voting Rights of Convicted Felons.

The first lecture got underway with students in an AP Government Class. Magistrate Judge Ballou and Mike Pace, Founder and CEO of the Center for Teaching the Rule of Law, introduced the rule of law and its origin, meaning and applicability as the basis of freedoms enjoyed by citizens. The Rule of Law Program can be found at the www.ruleoflaw-vba.org





During the second lecture, Pat Hogeboom, Assistant United States Attorney, introduced the topic of the Evolution of the Amendments of the Constitution, Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. During this session, Judge Ballou discussed the development of voting rights and how current legislation protects these rights for all individuals, which is needed to continue a healthy democracy.

DISCUSSING CURRENT STATE LAWS



Judge Ballou, Gregory D. Habeeb, Virginia House of Delegates, and Onzlee Ware, Retired Delegate, discussed with students current state laws affecting the voting rights of felons and restoration of their voting rights.

The final lecture allowed students to bring the debate topic to life, setting the stage for the debate, Pros and Cons – Restoring the Voting Rights for Convicted Felons.



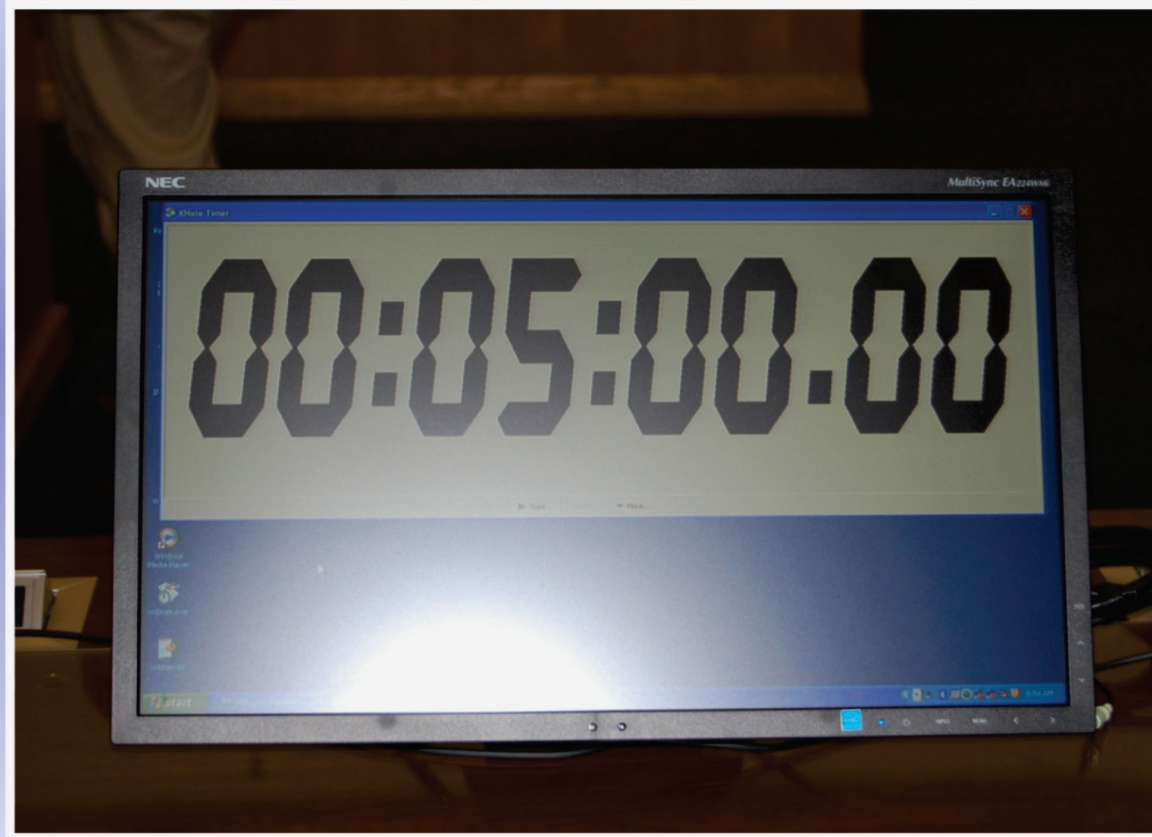
On May 5th, Judge Ballou welcomed the students to the federal court and discussed the rules for the debate. There were ten teams prepared to debate their views.



Michael Pace, Patrick Hogeboom, and Adjunct Professor Terry LaRocco prepare to judge the arguments and views of the students.



Each team was given five minutes to present the pros or the cons relating to their topic.



Each Pro Team was called to present the reasons why felons should have their rights restored.



And each Con Team was called to present why felons rights to vote should not be restored.



After presenting their arguments, each team was asked questions from the panel of judges. Students selected one spokesperson from each team to share their ideas and answer the question.



Students cited case law, recent changes in the law and statistics to sway the judges to agree with their arguments on the topic.



While the students were waiting for the judges to select the winners of the debate, Professor H. Timothy Isaacs, Vice President of the Center for the Teaching of the Rule of Law, discussed Lady Justice and the Rule of Law.



Awards were presented
to the teams who won the debate.



TESTIMONIALS

“Thank you again for all of your help and involvement in making the program a success! Our students had a very enriching experience.”

Shelley Winterer, AP Social Studies Teacher

“Tim and I want you to know how grateful we are for being included in the classroom preparations leading up to today's debates, and for the experience with the students this morning.”

“By any measure, the student debates were a complete success. We were impressed with the students' poise, preparation and presentation skills, and by the flawless execution of the organizational effort to make it all happen.”

Michael Pace and Timothy Isaacs

Founders of The Rule of Law Program.

“These talented young men and women vigorously participated in the classroom and robustly debated the topic. I found that the students analyzed the issues from many different perspectives and ultimately developed many different and challenging topics on the subject. All around, it was a rewarding and enriching experience.”

Magistrate Judge Robert S. Ballou