

**Superior Court of California
County of Santa Clara**



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Court Celebrates National Law Day with Focus on Community Engagement

*Essay contest, art competition, local legislative-day-on-the-bench
and Clergy Day mark this year's activities.*

SAN JOSE, California (May 1, 2014): Today the Superior Court of California, County of Santa Clara and other courts throughout the country are celebrating National Law Day, which Congress set aside to recognize the rule of law in American society. Locally, the Court marks Law Day by hosting a week of activities, which include Legislative-Day-on-the-Bench and Clergy Day, as well as an essay contest, art competition and educational tours.

"It's an ambitious week with a flurry of activities, but we're committed to civics education for our entire community," said Hon. Julia Alloggiamento, Chair of the Court's Community Outreach Committee. "This week we really focus on showing the connection between the Court and the lives of the residents of this County."

As part of Law Week, the Court hosted Legislative-Day-on-the-Bench yesterday, where local elected and appointed leaders received private tours from judicial leadership and were able to select and sit in on various court calendars. The day provided an opportunity for leaders to learn more about their respective priority issue areas from the judges who handle these issues on a daily basis, such as mental health, drug addiction, foster care and juvenile rehabilitation. Twenty mayors, council members, police chiefs, city managers, as well as Supervisor Cindy Chavez participated in the day's activities.

Additionally this year, the Court continued to sponsor its art competition for young people at James Ranch and Juvenile Hall, with the winning posters to be displayed in the newly redesigned lobby of the Juvenile Justice Courthouse. The Court also sponsored a countywide essay contest for eight graders, which received 125 entries from Ida Price, Bret Harte, Kennedy, Luther Burbank and Thomas Russell middle schools. The contest asked, "Does Every Vote Matter?" - a play off this year's Law Day theme (selected by the American Bar Association), "Every Vote Matters." The Court also used this theme for the poster contest.

The finale to the Court's Law Week celebration will be the 4th Clergy-and-the-Court (or Clergy Day), where clergy from all faiths in Santa Clara County are invited to an educational conference aimed at helping to provide legal information related to the challenges spiritual leaders encounter while ministering, such as mandatory reporting, domestic violence, and foster care. Santa Clara County and two other superior courts each received a \$1000 grant to support their respective conference. Santa Clara County's local conference is also co-sponsored by CIC Ministries, the non-profit organization that provides chaplaincy and ministry to inmates in Santa Clara County jails. The conference is expected to have nearly 90 members of local clergy in attendance next week on Wednesday, May 7th.

"Despite best intentions, clergy might be trying to help resolve a problem and inadvertently provide advice that is contrary to the law or best practices," said Hon. Franklin Bondonno, the judge who helped found this event five years ago. "Because of their position within the community, clergy will often put them in circumstances where people are looking to them for advice and counsel. We want to make sure they have the right information and know where the resources are within our community so that they might better help their congregants and worshippers."

ABOUT LAW DAY

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower established Law Day as a day of national dedication to the principles of government under law. In 1961, Congress, by joint resolution, designated May 1 as the official date for celebrating Law Day. Every year, the American Bar Association selects a theme for Law Day to draw attention to a specific area of the law. This year's theme is "Every Vote Matters."

WRITTEN WORD – FIRST PLACE

Our Voice. Our Choice.

"The land of the free and the home of the brave,"
America's legacy will forever engrave.
But with successive elections, we may have lost faith,
In a system of voting that seems out of place.
The popular vote may not be sufficient
If the Electoral College deems that it isn't.
Our beautiful country does not understand
The governing laws of our very own land.

"Every vote counts!" or so the phrase goes.
But that's not something that everyone knows.
So the folks on the street simply look on,
And pass by these posters with a shrug and a yawn.
If asked of the value of voting's true purposes,
Nonvoters' apathy suddenly surfaces.
"The Electoral College is the one that does it,"
State thousands of citizens who fail to commit.

"Will a single vote matter?" people will whine,
But it matters a lot, especially combined.
Much like for a jury that has just heard a trial,
Every last vote is exceptionally vital.
If there is no agreement on what's the real story,
The outcome of the trial may result in a hung jury.
If one vote can change the fate of a man,
Imagine its outcome on the fate of our land.

The saying rings true as you can clearly see,
Every vote matters -- from you and from me.
With every election I ask you take part,
It's a duty and right we must take to heart.
Wars have been fought; countless wounded or killed,

Our soldiers stand guard for our country still,
To protect America's red, white, and blue palette,
And guarantee our freedom to cast our own ballot.

ESSAY – FIRST PLACE

“Does Every Vote Matter?”

This country established a system where people were allowed to vote to elect leaders and pass laws so there would be no tyranny, to allow people the freedom to choose what they thought was best for their own lives. Voting is not only a right, it's an obligation everyone in this country has to preserve the liberties and rights Americans have today.

Every single vote matters in an election because every American is guaranteed the same rights. If one person's vote wasn't counted, that takes away their freedom to express themselves. If one or two people decided not to vote, it might not make a difference in a particular election, but history has shown it might in fact make a difference.

In 1839, a Massachusetts gubernatorial election was decided by two votes (out of 102,066). A New Hampshire Senate race was decided by two votes (out of 223,363) in 1974. And the Alaskan congressional race was decided by a single vote (out of 10,035 cast) in 2008.

In a Democratic society we have a responsibility to exercise the rights we're given. It's what makes this country great. It's why people from all over the world want to be here. We play a part in our destiny and in America that part is a vote.

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