

**Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development****Grants to Municipalities (AS 37.05.315)****Grant Recipient: Fairbanks North Star Borough****Federal Tax ID: 92-6000096****Project Title:****Project Type: Other**

# Fairbanks North Star Borough - Fairbanks North Star Borough School District We the People Competition

**State Funding Requested: \$25,000****House District: Fairbanks Areawide (7-11)**

One-Time Need

**Brief Project Description:**

Provide travel, meals, housing, materials, and space rental for regional and statewide 'We the People' competition.

**Funding Plan:**

Total Project Cost:	\$25,000
Funding Already Secured:	(\$0)
FY2013 State Funding Request:	(\$25,000)
Project Deficit:	\$0

**Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

The funding will make sure this project continues. Funds will be used for materials, travel, lodging, space for the competition, and preparation for the students.

The hallmark of the We the People program is the design of its K-12 instructional program, including its innovative culminating activity, a mock congressional hearing where students testify on constitutional issues before a panel of judges comprised of community leaders.

Research has documented that students involved in the program have had an 82 percent voter turnout. However, the powerful educational effects extend beyond the polls. Students involved with the program show:

1. Knowledge. Students demonstrated of greater understanding of politics and how to participate effectively in the political process;
2. Intellectual skills. Students demonstrate greater research, analytic, and communication skills;
3. Participatory skills. Students demonstrate a greater capacity to work with others;
4. Attitudes. Students demonstrate a greater commitment to fundamental values and principles of constitutional democracy; and
5. Behavior. Students pay more attention to politics and the media and take active roles in the enactment of policies to improve life in their communities.

This is an extremely important program for our students, for our state, and for our nation. However, during this last Congress, funding was cut for this program that Congress had created and funded continuously for the last 24 years. While this funding may be reinstated, it is critical to continue Alaska's program's growth.

With program growth, the Alaska team has made an impact at the prestigious We the People national competition. In 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010, the Alaskan team earned first place awards for best unit presentation. Most recently, in 2011, the Alaska team earned a best in region award and an 11th place overall. Over the years, as the program has developed, the number of participating Alaskan schools as well as students involved has led to a stronger program.

**Project Timeline:**

FY 13

**Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:**

N/A

**Grant Recipient Contact Information:**

Name: Traci Gatewood  
Title: Director of Grants & Special Projects  
Address: 520 5th Ave  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701  
Phone Number: (907)452-2000  
Email: traci.gatewood@k12northstar.org

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority?  Yes  No

## White Paper – We the People

For more than twenty years Alaska's We the People competition has been creating thoughtful citizens. During this time more than ten thousand students have participated in We the People.

The hallmark of the We the People program is the design of its K-12 instructional program, including its innovative culminating activity, a mock congressional hearing where students testify on constitutional issues before a panel of judges recruited from community leaders.

It is necessary to emphasize that this is a competition for everyone; it involves more than one person or a small elite team or group. In order to enter this competition or showcase, a school must show that the participants are members of a regular rostered class and that all students in the class participate. At a recent state competition, eleven teams totaling more than 250 students enjoyed a day of spirited competition at Anchorage's Captain Cook Hotel. However, this program is more than a competitive program for honor students. Another positive feature focuses on using the mock congressional hearing part of a classroom performance final exam.

An additional highlight of the mock congressional hearing that is at the crux of this program is the role of the judges and the consequent interaction between the school and the community. Leaders in the community who have served as judges include:

State Representatives David Guttenberg Scott Kawasaki, and Chris Tuck  
Congressional Aides Julie Hasquet and Tom Moyer  
Fairbanks Borough Mayor Luke Hopkins  
District Court Judge Honorable Jane Kauvar  
District Attorney Gayle Garrigues  
Public Advocate Karla Taylor-Welch  
Attorney at Law Chancy Croft  
Public Defender Marcia Holland  
Attorney at Law Daniel Callahan  
Attorney at Law David Baranow  
University of Alaska Fairbanks Professor Terrence Cole  
University of Alaska Fairbank Associate Professor Mary Ehrlander  
University of Alaska Anchorage Professor Paul Ongtooguk  
University of Alaska Anchorage Associate Professor Deb Periman  
Air Force Historian Doug Beckstead  
Former Aide to Congressman Young and School Board Member Royce Chapman  
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Labor Relations Director Gayle Pierce  
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Human Relations Director Clarence Bolden  
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Assistant Superintendent Wayne Gerke.

### **Research Results**

Research has documented that students involved in the program have had an 82 percent voter turnout. However, the powerful educational effects extend beyond the polls. Students involved with the program show:

1. **Knowledge:** Students demonstrated of greater understanding of politics and how to participate effectively in the political process.
2. **Intellectual skills:** Students demonstrate greater research, analytic, and communication skills.
3. **Participatory skills:** Students demonstrate a greater capacity to work with other.

4. Attitudes: Students demonstrate a greater commitment to fundamental values and principles of constitutional democracy.
5. Behavior: Students pay more attention to politics and the media and take active roles in the enactment of policies improve the life of their communities.

This is an extremely important program for our students, for our state, and for our nation. However, during this last Congress, funding was cut for this program that Congress had created and funded continuously for the last 24 years. While this funding may be reinstated, it is critical to continue Alaska's program's growth.

### **History of the Program in Alaska**

In the last ten years, with the initiation of a competitive high school state final, the program has grown exponentially. Starting with one team from the Anchorage area in 2000, now high schools, both public and private from Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Mat-Su compete. For the past three years, schools have conducted qualifying competition to earn the right to compete in the state competition.

With program growth, the Alaska team has made an impact at the prestigious We the People national competition. In 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010 the Alaskan team earned first places for best unit presentation. Most recently, in 2011, the Alaska team earned a best in region award and an 11<sup>th</sup> place overall. Over the years, as the program has developed, the number of participating Alaskan schools as well as students involved has lead to a stronger program.

For the past two years, we have also conducted a middle school showcase. In the most recent event, nearly 300 students from 12 classes, with two classes traveling from Fairbanks to the site on the University of Alaska Anchorage campus, participated.

### **Current Needs**

Participating teachers and community leaders have expressed an overwhelming desire to continue the hearing process. This plan calls for regional events where students participate in the mock congressional hearing before a panel of community judges. This modified budget also includes a limited state event. This includes concomitant travel and lodging costs. This request also includes continued professional development, community outreach, and program follow-up. These efforts represent the maintaining of an infrastructure that will continue the program until congressional funding can be restored. The accompanying spreadsheet delineates budget costs.

# ***DOUGLAS BECKSTEAD***

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## **Historian**

2909 Klamath Drive  
Anchorage, Alaska 99517

21 February 2012

Representative David Guttenberg  
State Capitol Room 418  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Guttenberg:

It has come to my attention that you are sponsoring legislation that would fund the Alaska portion of the *We the People* program. I would like to express my gratitude that you have taken an interest in the program.

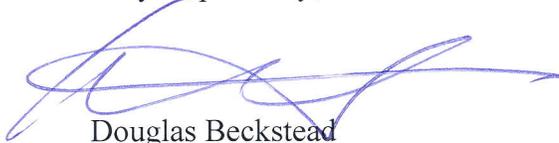
I have served as a judge for approximately ten years in the Fairbanks and Anchorage regional competitions and the statewide competition. This year I am looking forward to representing Alaska as a judge at the national competition in Washington DC in April.

It has been my pleasure to run into a number of students after they have graduated and moved on to bigger and better things and to find that their experience with the *We the People* program has left a lasting impression on them as they take their place among the citizens of our great country. One former student competitor now works as a legislative assistant for Representative Lindsey Holmes (unfortunately I cannot recall his name off-hand).

As a professional historian, I find the program to be extremely valuable to Alaska's high school students. It provides a solid, in-depth foundation on how our Constitution came about as well as a broad understanding of how it functions in our day-to-day lives. This is something that is sorely lacking in most of the history courses being taught today. The students I have encountered have taken a great deal of interest in the program and the competition for regional and state champions is very keen every year. The course affords students a very solid understanding of what it means to be a citizen of our great country and why it is so important that they exercise their rights as citizens.

I support your efforts to fund the *We the People* program and would be happy to lend any additional support that I can to see this legislation through the process.

Very respectfully,



Douglas Beckstead  
Historian  
Anchorage, Alaska

Tanya Beatus  
2015 Bridgewater Drive  
Fairbanks, AK 99709  
[tbeatus@gmail.com](mailto:tbeatus@gmail.com)  
(907) 750-5339

February 24, 2012

Representative Guttenberg  
State Capitol Bldg. Room 418  
Juneau, AK 99801

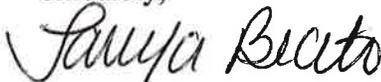
Dear Representative Guttenberg:

I write in support of your efforts to fund the statewide *We the People* High School program. For the last few years, I've had the pleasure of volunteering as a judge for the *We the People* program both on the district and statewide levels.

The knowledge and confidence of our students paired with pertinent topics from the U.S. Constitution makes for a wonderful program. Our students are able to have in depth conversations regarding past and present political issues. After judging such competitions, I am hopeful for the future as I know these students are the basis of our democracy.

Again, I applaud your efforts to seek funding to keep this very important program alive in our State and Nation.

Sincerely,



Tanya Beatus  
*We the People* Judge

cc: Maida Buckley, *We the People* Statewide Coordinator

## Meredith Cameron

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**From:** Jane Kauvar <jkauvar@courts.state.ak.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 22, 2012 11:00 AM  
**To:** Meredith Cameron  
**Subject:** We The People Support

Representative David Guttenberg  
Alaska Legislature  
February 22, 2012

Attention: Meredith Cameron

Dear Representative Guttenberg,

I am writing to thank you for your support of the program entitled “We the People”, a national high school civics program. For many years, I have been fortunate enough to judge the competition at the local, state and national level.

This is an outstanding program because it is done within classrooms, and entire classes participate, so that many more students benefit from the education than would happen in an after-school activity. Democracy requires informed citizens. The students that I have observed as a judge reassure me that there will be highly informed and knowledgeable citizens in the next generation.

Furthermore, this is a non-partisan educational program based on a study of the history of the Constitution and its application to current issues. The questions answered by students are designed to show that they can think. There are no “right or wrong” answers based on ideology. Instead, there is a requirement that they use what they have learned from history to tackle current issues facing our country today. Questions regarding the interpretation of our Constitution and the roles of the different branches of government are central to our country today. Clearly, this is a time when an informed citizenry is critical.

I appreciate your willingness to continue to work toward finding funding to allow for the continued existence of this excellent program. It has taken many years of hard work to get the program to where it is today, and it would be a travesty of justice to allow it to come to an end. It is a tribute to the program that it continued on this year, after losing federal funding. However, I do not believe it will continue without regaining some funding. Recently, I judged this year’s regional and state competitions, held in Fairbanks. It was very sad to think that this would be the end of this great program. I know that everyone who participates, and observes the students in action, is impressed with the depth of knowledge demonstrated by the students. For this reason, I am happy to hear that you are working on finding funding for this program.

Thank you in advance for your hard work on this matter, and I appreciate your support!

Sincerely yours,

Jane F. Kauvar  
Fairbanks, Alaska





## **Meredith Cameron**

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**From:** Randy Frank <randyfrank@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 26, 2012 5:08 PM  
**To:** Meredith Cameron  
**Subject:** We The People Support

Dear Meredith,

I have been privileged to be a judge three times for the Alaska state wide "We The People" program that Maida Buckley heads up so well. I am in full support of any monetary help that the State of Alaska can provide for the program. Since federal dollars have dried up for the program, it is important for Alaska to step up and help.

This study program is very helpful to the education of our high school students making them better informed citizens. This program helps me also because to judge the students, I have to research the material myself. It is a good learning experience for all.

Sincerely,  
Randy Frank  
Former North Star Borough Assembly Member



Janelle Leigh Perry  
776 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
907-322-8358 • [JanellePerry907@gmail.com](mailto:JanellePerry907@gmail.com)

February 27, 2012

Representative David Guttenberg  
State Capitol Bldg. Room 418  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Representative Guttenberg,

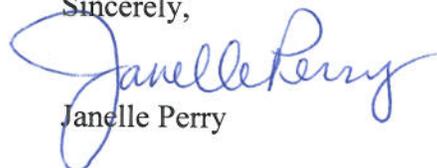
Thank you for your support and work towards securing funding for the "We the People" competition in Alaska. The loss of federal funds for this program has been a critical obstacle in ensuring the continuation of this civic education program for Alaskan students.

This year I was asked to be a judge for both the regional and state competitions in Fairbanks, AK. The students, who volunteered to be in the class and competition, had all obviously spent considerable time learning about the founding of the United States and our constitutional history. The "We the People" program motivated the students to understand the material and be civically engaged before many of them can even vote. They learned to think critically about the founding of our country and how those principles can be applied today in a very different world. The critical thinking and public speaking skills developed for participation in this competition are invaluable and will continue to serve the students as they become productive members of society.

This year, the students of West Valley High School in Fairbanks won the State competition and will be going to Washington, DC in April to represent Alaska. However, because there is no funding for them to compete, the school and the students will be responsible for raising all of the funds for the airfare and expenses in Washington, DC. Although all 50 states are burdened with this new financial requirement, Alaska is disproportionately impacted because of the distance from the capitol and cost of airfare.

I appreciate your efforts, along with Senator Joe Thomas, in securing funding so Alaskan schools can continue participating in this phenomenal program which emphasizes being a good citizen through learning and civic participation.

Sincerely,

  
Janelle Perry

LAW OFFICE OF ROBERT JOHN

P.O. Box 73570

Fairbanks, Alaska 99707

907-456-6056

907-456-6057 FAX

February 27, 2012

Alaska State Legislature  
Capitol Building  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: We The People Funding

Dear Distinguished Members of the Alaska Legislature:

It has recently come to my attention that your honorable and august body is considering funding the We The People program in Alaska. Should you do so, that would be a most-wise expenditure of resources, one that will have both immediate and lasting, long-term benefits to Alaskans as today's students become the leaders of tomorrow.

I have had the good fortune of being involved with the We The People program for approximately the last decade and to have judged in the local and statewide competitions during most of those years. Should you not already be familiar with We The People, it is in essence a nationally-recognized program in our schools focusing on the issues facing us as citizens in a constitutional democracy.

I see the immediate impact of We The People every time I judge a competition. The students I have thereby encountered are thoroughly prepared to discuss issues, ranging from the political theories and legal principles which influenced our founders to the pressing issues of today. While some of this is undoubtedly due to the tireless efforts of their teachers, the ultimate result is the product of extensive preparation by the students that places them in the position of truly thinking about their roles as citizens in our society.

My own personal reward from encountering the students in the We The People program has been to experience their energy and enthusiasm for being better citizens and to think freshly about my own role as a citizen of Alaska and the United States. More importantly, however, is that when I see the level of preparation, knowledge, and thought

February 27, 2012

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evidenced by those in the We The People program and realize that those students will be the leaders of tomorrow, I know our future is and will be in good hands as many of those students will someday serve as your aides and some of them will eventually stand in your shoes.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that the Legislature will choose to fund the We The People program. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. John', written in a cursive style.

Robert John

RJ/cr

## Meredith Cameron

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**From:** Gayle Pierce <gayle.pierce@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 01, 2012 3:28 PM  
**To:** Meredith Cameron  
**Subject:** WTP Support

Dear Representative Guttenberg,

I want to add my voice of support for the We The People program. This is an excellent curriculum focused the U.S. Constitution. I have been a judge for the program at classroom, district, and state competitions and at every level students experience a first rate educational experience. The program involves research, collaboration with students on a team, preparation for a team presentation, performance as a team at the competition, and extemporaneous application of the material studied. I am very pleased to know that through your efforts this program may be funded on the state level. Thank you for your support for this excellent program.

Gayle Pierce

## Meredith Cameron

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**From:** Patricia Behner <pat.behner@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 24, 2012 3:56 PM  
**To:** Meredith Cameron  
**Subject:** wtp support

Dear Rep. Guttenberg,

As a social studies teacher with 38 years of experience, I am writing this letter to unequivocally ask for your support for the *We the People* program, from the Center for Civic Education. Not only has this program changed the way I teach, it has changed the way my students learn. Through *We the People*, students experience government through intense preparation and participation in the competitive hearing process. Working in "Unit Groups" that are part of a class team fosters a sense of community that cannot be equalled by a more traditional approach to instruction. The competition spotlights student learning, teamwork, presentation skills and understanding of our Constitution and the American political system. The opportunity to present to an audience greater than the class or school pushes the achievement bar higher than other instructional strategies.

I have been involved with the Center for Civic Education for ten years and have coached ten competition teams. The *We the People* competition remains a high point of the participants' high school careers. I continue to receive emails from my WtP alumni recalling the significance of their competition experience. Participation enhances self confidence and esteem, teaches responsibility and accountability, and is great fun!

Unfortunately as you know, the *We the People* program lost federal funding during this past year. If this incredible experience and learning opportunity is to remain part of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District's array of possibilities for our students, support must come from alternative sources. What better way to invest in the future of Alaska than to provide this program for our youth. We hope you and the Alaska Legislature can support the *We the People* program and competition in our schools.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Behner  
Social Studies Teacher  
North Pole High school