

# SOUTHERN DISTRICT *of* CALIFORNIA

*A*s the trial courts of the federal government, district courts have limited jurisdiction over a wide variety of civil and criminal cases. There are 94 federal judicial districts grouped into 12 regional circuits. The Southern District of California, created in 1966, is part of the 9th Circuit and has jurisdiction over San Diego and Imperial Counties. The entire western boundary of the Southern District lies on the Pacific Ocean. The entire southern boundary of the District borders the Republic of Mexico. There are international ports of entry at San Ysidro, Otay Mesa, Tecate, Calexico, and Andrade. The San Ysidro port of entry is the western hemisphere's busiest land crossing where over 14 million vehicles and 40 million people legally enter the United States each year.

San Diego is the 8th largest city in the United States with a population of over 1.4 million people. San Diego County has a population of more than 3 million; Imperial County has a population of 160,000. As a major urban center, the Southern District of California experiences the full range of legal and criminal activities present in any metropolitan area. Because of its proximity to an international border, the District continues to be a major corridor for both illegal immigration and illicit drug trafficking activities. It is not surprising that the Southern District of California ranks near the top of the nation in federal felony filings. The Southern District also handles the full range of civil litigation common in large cities.

# COURTROOMS AS CLASSROOMS



Presented by  
The Community Outreach Committee of the  
U.S. District Court for the Southern District of  
California

#### Contact Information:

Carter/Keep Courthouse, 333 West  
Broadway, Suite 530 San Diego, CA 92101

Email: [Community\\_outreach@casd.uscourts.gov](mailto:Community_outreach@casd.uscourts.gov)  
<http://www.casd.uscourts.gov/judicial-learning>  
Telephone: (619) 557-6928



THE LEARNING CENTER  
*of the*  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

*"Building confidence in American justice through  
education and understanding."*

# COURTROOMS AS CLASSROOMS

For the past 50 years, the Southern District of California has served the public by conducting fair and impartial civil and criminal proceedings. In recent times, the Court began actively inviting members of the public to come inside our courthouse(s) as part of our community outreach. The Court has now embarked on establishing a Learning Center. The goal of the Learning Center is to better inform the community of the role an independent judiciary plays in our Constitutional democracy. We seek to promote understanding about what the federal courts do through exhibits, educational programs and tours. By promoting knowledge and understanding, we hope our citizens are better informed and have greater confidence in our judicial system.

The Learning Center grew out of our existing, active community outreach programs and has four components. The first component consists of our ongoing educational programs which are more fully defined inside this booklet. The second component of the Learning Center consists of exhibits. On display throughout our courthouses are exhibits that enhance understanding of the third branch of government and the Southern District of California, including a "Then and Now Exhibit showing the evolution of this District, the winning essays and videos from our District's civics contest for local high school students, copies of the founding documents, portraits of the judges after whom buildings are named, and court memorabilia. The third component of the Learning Center is the Historical Walking Tour. A brochure (also available as a cell phone app) guides guests around the five-block John Rhoades Federal Judicial Center and highlights the historic points of interest, architectural features, and artwork. The final component of the Learning Center is our website ([www.casd.uscourts.gov/judicial-learning](http://www.casd.uscourts.gov/judicial-learning)). It provides information about the history of the Southern District of California, including videos, information about our Learning Center, and links to additional information on civics education.

**We welcome you to come and discover YOUR federal courts.**

The judges of the United States District Court for the Southern District of California have developed the following presentations, which are designed to explain various aspects of the judicial system to students of all ages. Please contact our Community Outreach Liaison, Lisa Christensen, at [community\\_outreach@casd.uscourts.gov](mailto:community_outreach@casd.uscourts.gov) to discuss the particular needs and interests of your group.

Primary Grades K-4	Elementary Grade 5	Jr. High/Middle School Grade 8	High School Grades 9-12	College/Life-Long Learning
Classroom visits	Mock Trials		Open Doors	Observation of Court Proceedings
Self Guided Historical Walking Tour	Self Guided Historical Walking Tour	The Judicial System in Action (video mock trial in classrooms)	Federal Jobs Panel	The Constitution in Action
U.S. Marshals Presentation	U.S. Marshals Presentation	U.S. Marshals Presentation	CARE Presentation	Self Guided Historical Walking Tour
		Observation of Court Proceedings	Observation of Court Proceedings	Federal Jobs Panel
		The Constitution in Action	The Constitution in Action	CARE Presentation

**Classroom Visits** - Judge or attorney will come to your classroom to discuss the American system of justice with your students. This can include presiding over a mock trial scenario in the classroom.

**Historical Walking Tour of the John Rhoades Federal Judicial Center** - This self-guided tour through and around the federal judicial center illustrates over 100 years of history in the Southern District of California through the art and architecture of our three distinct courthouses.

**U.S. Marshals presentation** - Students will learn about the job of Deputy U.S. Marshals and may have an opportunity to see a holding cell and try on some law enforcement equipment. They may also have the opportunity to meet our explosives detecting canine and his handler and learn how these amazing dogs are trained and work.

**Mock Trials** - The court invites 5th graders mock trials in which students take on all the roles and serve as the jury. A judge and/or attorneys will be present throughout the trial to assist the students and provide additional information about the judicial system. The U.S. Marshals' presentation and the self-guided Historical Walking Tour maybe combined with the mock trials.

**The Judicial System in Action** - A judge or lawyer visits a classroom and presents a mock trial utilizing an interactive video in which all of the actors are middle-school aged. During the videotaped presentation, the judge or lawyer will explain important components of a trial and at the conclusion, the students will act as jurors and decide the guilt or innocence of two middle-school students accused of possession of marijuana with the intent to sell.

## Open Doors

Once year, the court invites 200 high school students to visit the court for the school day. In March, students participate in Observation of Court Proceedings, a CARE program, The Constitution in Action and Federal jobs Panels. Students divide into tracks to move through the programs offered and participate through discussion and self-reflection.

**Observation of Court Proceedings** - Students are invited to watch actual court proceedings, usually a sentencing calendar, which will allow them the opportunity to hear from a prosecutor, defense attorney, the defendant and the judge. They will see the real life consequences of breaking the law. After about 1 hour of court observation, the students will be taken to a conference room to debrief and ask questions about what they observed. Court observation will be coupled with The Constitution in Action presentation and/or a federal jobs panel.

**The Constitution in Action** - A judge or group of attorneys explain(s) how the Bill of Rights and other Constitutional Amendments are the basis for what happens in the federal courts everyday.

**Federal Jobs Panel** - Volunteers from the various agencies associated with the federal courts explain the details of their jobs and the education and training required to get those jobs. Members of various federal law enforcement agencies and MCC (the jail) may also be included in the panel to give students a global overview of the system.

**CARE (Credit Abuse Resistance Education) Presentation** - Members of the bankruptcy court bench and bar give interactive presentations to students on credit card abuse, payday loans, student loans and other topics important to good financial management skills.