The Second Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education was held December 4-6, 2004, in Washington, D.C. More than 400 participants, including delegations from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, assembled to declare their commitment to reaffirming the civic mission of schools within their states. Conference sessions focused on highlighting the principles of citizenship, the rationale for invoking a national movement in civic education, and the accomplishments and challenges of state coalitions throughout the year. State delegations composed of 5- to 7-person teams of influential people who have the potential to impact educational policy and practice in their respective states formed the core of the conference participants. In addition, more than 90 representatives from national civic education and professional organizations and offices of the federal government attended the conference, including representatives from the U.S. Department of Education and various legislative offices.

The joint leadership of Congress—Senate Majority Leader William Frist, former Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle, Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert, and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi—served as honorary hosts of the conference. The event was the second of five scheduled congressional conferences on civic education. The Alliance for Representative Democracy, a collaborative effort of the Center on Congress at Indiana University, the Trust for Representative Democracy of the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the Center for Civic Education, sponsored the conference. The Alliance for Representative Democracy is funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

Lee H. Hamilton, former Congressman and Director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University, delivered the opening address of the conference titled “Civic Engagement and the Common Good” at the opening plenary session on Sunday, December 5, at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium. Hamilton referenced an ancient Greek democratic creed—that we must “transmit this country greater, stronger, prouder, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.”

Charles Quigley, Executive Director of the Center, gave a speech titled “The Status of Civic Education: Making the Case for a National Movement.” Quigley described some of the successes at the state and local levels as a result of the first congressional conference. Quigley reported that delegations in 34 states have developed coalitions of policymakers, representatives of educational institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and the media to promote the adoption of policies that support civic education and to support their implementation. In 19 states, delegations are conducting benchmark surveys to determine the steps that need to be taken to improve civic education. The results of these surveys will be shared with policymakers at the state and district levels. Delegations in 20 states have hosted or will host summit conferences, legislative sessions, and symposia similar to the congressional conference. Legislation has been introduced in eight

Students from Ritter Elementary School in Allentown, Pennsylvania, showcased their *We the People: Project Citizen* portfolio “Ritter Against Litter,” during the Second Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education. The students described how they rewrote a section of their school’s handbook to include a provision against campus littering.
Message from the Center

Conference Statement

The following statement was affirmed by the vast majority of state delegations at the Second Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education, held December 4–6, 2004, in Washington, D.C.

The delegates to the Second Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education hereby

ACKNOWLEDGE that democracies are sustained by citizens who have the civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions to participate competently and responsibly in the civic and political life of the nation. Absent an informed and engaged citizenry, a free and open society cannot succeed. Schools bear a special and historic responsibility beginning in the earliest years and continuing through the entire educational process to foster the qualities of mind and heart required for good citizenship.

AFFIRM our commitment to the Statement of Principles as adopted by the delegates to the First Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education which noted that civic knowledge and engagement are essential to maintaining our representative democracy; that civic education should be seen as a core subject; and that quality teacher education and professional development and well-designed classroom programs are essential components of a quality civic education.

PLEDGE to continue our efforts to strengthen the foundation of our representative democracy by reaffirming and reinvigorating the civic mission of schools.

ADOPTED at the Second Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education, December 6, 2004, Washington, D.C.

The conference also featured discussions among key civic education leaders titled “Reflections on Democracy: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship,” “Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned from across the Country,” and “Engaging National Effort.”

Second Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education Invigorates Nationwide Civics Effort

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states and passed in Kentucky, Louisiana, and Utah.

Other conference speakers included Terry Pickeral, Executive Director of the National Center for Learning and Leadership for the Education Commission of the States; Azar Nafisi, Director of the Dialogue Project at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies; Eugene Hickok, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Education; Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland; Senator Debbie A. Stabenow of Michigan; former Senator Bob Graham of Florida; David Skaggs, Director of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools; and John Bridgeland, President of Civic Enterprises.

Charles Quigley, Executive Director of the Center for Civic Education, delivered a speech titled “The Status of Civic Education: Making the Case for a National Movement,” where he described successes at the state and local levels that resulted from the first congressional conference.

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The Center for Civic Education is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization. The mission of the Center is to promote an enlightened and responsible citizenry committed to democratic principles and actively engaged in the practice of democracy in the United States and other countries. To attain this goal, the Center develops and implements civic education programs for public and private schools at the elementary and secondary levels, cooperating with educators and scholars in the social sciences, the humanities, and the law. The Center offers curricular materials, leadership training, teacher education, and research and evaluation for national and international civic education programs.

The Center Correspondent is published three times a year by the Center for Civic Education to disseminate information about and to encourage participation in programs primarily funded by federal grants and contracts.

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Lee H. Hamilton, former Congressman and Director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University, delivered the opening address titled "Civic Engagement and the Common Good." Hamilton urged Americans in the aftermath of 9/11 to "teach what it is we believe; to elevate the dialogue of democracy; and to focus on the common good."

Organizations in the Effort to Promote Civic Education.” Topic panelists were Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of Pennsylvania; Marvin Kalb, Senior Fellow, Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University; Margaret Branson, Associate Director of the Center for Civic Education; Kay Maxwell, President of the League of Women Voters of the United States; The Honorable Rebecca Vigil-Giron, Secretary of State of New Mexico; and Jesus Garcia, President of the National Council for the Social Studies. Cokie Roberts, ABC News political commentator, and Dan Werner, President of MacNeil/Lehrer Productions, served as panel moderators.

Delegates had access to resource materials from coalition partnerships and national civic education organizations during the walk-around session and were able to meet with participants of similar elective or professional backgrounds during affinity group meetings. These meetings provided an opportunity for state legislators, statewide elected officials, and state and district education officials to share experiences and focus on strategies to assist the state coalitions. Delegates attended breakout sessions that addressed a range of key topics identified by state coalitions throughout the year as being significant to their campaigns.

State delegations had the opportunity to witness civic education in action on the second day of the conference, when two student groups presented their classroom projects. Students from Ritter Elementary School in Allentown, Pennsylvania, showcased their We the People: Project Citizen portfolio “Ritter Against Litter.” The students, participants in the Center for Civic Education’s School Violence Prevention Demonstration Program, described how they were able to rewrite a section of their school’s handbook to include a provision against campus littering. One of the students spoke about what she learned from participating in the Violence Prevention Program: “Responsible citizens can make a difference,” she said. “When we work together, anything can happen.” Students from Nursery Road Elementary School in Columbia, South Carolina, presented their First Amendment Schools project, part of a program that encourages schools to teach and practice democratic values through study of the five First Amendment freedoms.

Following the presentation by the students, Azar Nafisi presented her keynote address, “The Gift of Democracy.” Nafisi described the importance of civic education as the way through which students perceive themselves in relation to others. She spoke of promoting “democratic imagination” among students so that their curiosity would lead to empathy and stated that the true purpose of democracy is to be a “flexible avenue for multiple voices.” Nafisi is the author of the best-selling Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books.

State teams met with their coalition members during the third day of the
conference to assess their progress during 2004, to develop action plans for 2005, and to reaffirm their dedication to reinstating the civic mission of schools within each state. While the state teams worked to develop their action plans, at-large delegates representing national civic education organizations discussed ways in which they could involve their local affiliates in supporting the civic mission of schools in their states and in encouraging a united, collaborative effort.

During the final session of the conference, a representative from each state delegation rose to confirm their action plans and endorse a conference statement. (See the “Message from the Center” article on p. 2.)

At the closing reception, Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland addressed the delegates, praising them for their work in civic education and encouraging them to continue in their progress.

State coalition teams left the conference to continue the work of advancing civic education in their schools. Delegates were encouraged by the success of states like Kentucky, where legislation passed calling for the Office of the Secretary of State, with assistance from the Department of Education and the Administrative Office of the Courts, to establish a committee that will convene a summit for civic literacy to determine strategies for enhancing long-term civic engagement and literacy within the Commonwealth. Florida achieved similar success. The state performed an audit of civic education policies and practices to determine the status of civic education in the state, which led to the writing of a middle school civics course.

For information about the conference or to see each state’s activities report, visit www.representativedemocracy.org or contact Mark Molli (molli@civiced.org) or Ted McConnell (mcconnell@civiced.org) at the Center.
Youth for Justice
State Directors Meet in Washington, D.C.

Youth for Justice State Directors and staff from 42 states attended the Youth for Justice State Directors Meeting from September 9–11 in Washington, D.C. The conference opened with the panel discussion “Religion and Politics: The 2004 Race for the Presidency.” J. Robert Flores, Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, welcomed conference participants.

David Skaggs, Director of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the Council for Excellence in Government, and Ted McConnell, Director of the Campaign to Promote Civic Education, provided updates on the Civic Mission of the Schools (CMS) Campaign. Peter Levine, Deputy Director of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, shared recent research about what works in civic education. A presentation by University of Wisconsin Professor Diana Hess focused on the CMS best practices recommendation of increasing opportunities for students to enhance their participation in informed discussion of important issues. Subsequent sessions addressed the issue of how Youth for Justice State Directors could capitalize on the CMS Campaign to enhance civic education in their states.