

CAGT's Legislative Day at the Capitol: Celebrating Excellence – February 19, 2009 “Tips and Resources for Being Prepared”

Be Informed!

If you plan to shadow a legislator, research the bills he or she is sponsoring. Be ready to ask questions about the legislation. **What questions would you pose?**

✓ Useful Websites:

- Official Site of State of Colorado – www.colorado.gov
- Colorado Government –
- <http://www.colorado.gov/colorado-get-involved/learn-more-about-government.html>
- Colorado General Assembly – www.leg.state.co.us
- Colorado Department of Education (CDE) – www.cde.state.co.us
- Gifted and Talented Education (CDE website) – www.cde.state.co.us/gt/index.htm
- U.S. Department of Education – www.ed.gov/index.jhtml
- U.S. Congress Sites – www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Federal/legislative.shtml
- Project Vote Smart – www.vote-smart.org/index.htm
- National Association for Gifted Children – www.nagc.org
- National Education Association Legislative Action Center – www.nea.org
- U.S. Government: Voting & Elections – www.firstgov.gov/citizen/topics/voting.shtml

✓ Media Coverage:

- News websites
- Local, state, national coverage of legislative issues
- Radio and television special reports such as “State of Colorado” on public television and public radio

✓ Track a bill's progress using State Bill Information

✓ Suggested Classroom Activities:

- Follow a current bill of your choice through the legislative process. What are some reasons that influenced its passage or failure? Who were the major lobbyists for and against this bill? How did they affect the outcome?
- An important bill is about to be brought up for a vote. It contains ethical issues that are extremely controversial. Should an elected

official vote according to the majority vote of the district he/she represents, or according to his/her own best judgment?

- Write a personal reflection of your shadow experience. How did your state legislator use communication, problem solving, math skills, technology, and critical thinking in his/her role at the legislature? How will you apply this experience to your daily life?
- What qualifications and personal characteristics are needed to become a state legislator? What additional training, education, and background experiences are needed or would be helpful to be an effective legislative leader?

- List some current state legislators who have dual careers while serving as elected officials. Identify their “other” careers. Have these careers influenced the legislators’ voting record or legislation that they have introduced? Explain.
- Identify a community problem or issue. Gather and evaluate information from a variety of sources. Examine solutions and public policies that are now being used to address your problem. Develop your own public policy. Develop a plan of action to show how you might influence the appropriate governmental agency.
- Choose a current bill and/or policy. Draw a political cartoon which addresses a controversial issue.
- You have decided to run for state office. Identify your platform and the audience who will support your ideas. Design a campaign slogan and strategy. Include fund raising efforts, public announcements, community outreach, printed media.
- Write a bill of rights for your class or family.
- Devise a plan to increase voter participation for a local or national election.
- Create an artistic(visual, musical, dramatic) interpretation of democracy.
- Research the architecture of the Capitol building. Why do you suppose this architectural style was chosen to represent the legislative branch of our government?

Special Note to Interested Students, Teachers and Parents:

Additional information will be made available regarding hotel accommodations for out-of-town travelers, check-in procedures for the day, pre-arranged group activities, special hearings and committee meetings, expected protocol, and items to bring.

An announcement letter will be individually addressed to all of the 100 elected lawmakers of the Colorado General Assembly in the early part of January providing general information about CAGT’s legislative day at the Capitol. You are encouraged to contact your local elected state senator and representative to encourage them to participate in our activities.

We will make every effort to match students (grades 8 – 12) with their constituent state representative or state senator. It makes it much easier for us, if schools do not send a large number of students. There are only 100 Colorado legislators and not all agree to host a shadow. Some do agree to host more than one student. We are seeking outstanding GT students who have demonstrated exceptional interest, knowledge and skills in the areas of political science, community leadership and public speaking.

We also expect and plan for adults (parents, teachers, administrators, school board members and community members) to join us for this day. There will be a special session planned in the morning at the Capitol for all adult participants...with an opportunity to meet and hear from Colorado's political leadership at the Capitol. This is a great opportunity NOT TO BE MISSED! And, by registering, you will be able to join us for the Lunchtime Forum at the Colorado History Museum.

Please continue to check for updates at CAGT's website: www.coloradogifted.org
Or contact CAGT at cagt@aol.com or 303.520.4887 for additional information.

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