TO: Teachers participating in the **We the People** National Finals

FROM: Robert S. Leming, Center for Civic Education

SUBJECT: Tips for preparing your students

The Center for Civic Education has developed the following tips for preparing students for the national finals. These tips are based on observations and comments from competition judges.

We provide the judges with relevant and fair criteria and instructions for evaluating your class's performance. The instructions strongly emphasize that judges should evaluate the content of students' prepared statements as well as their responses to judges' follow-up questions.

These tips are meant as suggestions only. There is no formula that will guarantee a winning team.

What do judges look for in the opening statement?
> Judges emphasize the criteria on the score sheet. They also check that students answer the question and the sub-questions specifically and that they make good use of their time.

Should I have one student read the opening statement or should I have my students share the presentation?
> Sharing the opening statement may be the most effective way of ensuring the participation of most students. However, we advise judges not to mark classes down when only one or two students make the opening statement.

Should my students memorize the opening statement?
> Center guidelines expressly allow the use of notes during prepared statements. While it is permissible to use notes, it is best not to read them verbatim but to use them as an aid in making presentations.
> In the instructions given to judges, it is stressed that neither the use of notes nor memorization should affect the group's scores. Some judges have even observed that memorizing can lead to more stress especially when students forget their lines and do not know how to proceed.

Should my students stand or sit when presenting?
> We recommend that students remain seated when they make their presentations. This seems to put the students more at ease and helps their