

Chairman Nathe and committee members, thank you for your time. My name is Jennifer Kallenbach. For the past 6 months, I have had the honor of serving as the State Coordinator for the North Dakota We the People program. However, my true passion and connection to this program stem from my role as a high school social studies teacher at Kidder County High School in Steele, North Dakota, where I actively use this program with my students. I would like to express my gratitude to the legislature for its ongoing support of civic education and the continued backing of the We the People program.

We the People was originally created in 1987 by the Congressional Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. It was unveiled as their principal educational program to celebrate the Constitution's anniversary. Since its inception, We the People has been utilized by teachers and students in all 50 states and has been consistently used by North Dakota educators since the late 1980s.

Thanks to the support of the North Dakota legislature, we have been able to offer teachers access to textbooks, resources, and summer training opportunities. Additionally, we have successfully organized an annual We the People simulated congressional hearing competition for students. It's important to stress that participation in the program is entirely voluntary, and educators have full autonomy over how they use the provided materials in their classrooms. All materials used in the program are bipartisan and directly align with North Dakota civics content standards. By offering these resources and continuing education opportunities, we aim to support teachers as professionals, trusting them and their schools to determine how best to utilize this information with their students. Most importantly, We the People equips students to understand their role as active and engaged citizens. As my colleague Chris Cavanaugh often says, "We the People doesn't give students the answers; it just helps them learn to make better arguments."

Since the 1980s, We the People has impacted countless North Dakota teachers and thousands of students. The program has been or is currently being implemented in rural Class B schools such as Kidder County, Edgeley, and Ellendale, as well as in larger schools in Bismarck and Minot. Both public and private school educators have voluntarily chosen to use the program's textbooks and attend the summer teacher training sessions.

In 2010, as a new North Dakota resident and first-year teacher, I had the opportunity to attend a We the People summer institute. That experience is one of the primary reasons I am still teaching in North Dakota today. Not only did I earn a much-needed continuing education credit and gain meaningful content knowledge about our nation's history and principles, but I also connected with a community of social studies teachers whose support and friendship have been invaluable over the years. I am committed to continuing this program to provide similar support to educators across our state. A lack of mentorship and support is a significant reason why many teachers leave the profession within their first five years. While We the People is designed to help students grow into engaged citizens, its secondary goal of supporting teachers is equally important.

Last week, we held our 2025 We the People Congressional Hearing competition, with nearly 150 North Dakota students participating. During the closing ceremony, Governor Armstrong addressed the students, emphasizing that their generation would be tasked with solving the challenges created by his generation. We the People is a great way to prepare our students for that responsibility.

Thank you for your continued support of civic education and the We the People program. Please review the attached proposed budget. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Schools that have used We the People

Wishek Public School
Our Redeemer's Christian School/Minot
Ellendale High School/Ellendale Public Schools
Bishop Ryan
Mott-Regent
Dakota Prairie/Petersburg
Griggs County Central
Belfield Public School
Center-Stanton Public School
South Prairie / Minot
YCC/Marmont
Wachter Middle School/Bismarck
South Heart Public
St. Mary's/ Bismarck
Kidder County / Steele
Edgely Public School
Century High School / Bismarck
Bismarck Public Schools
Napoleon
Washburn
Hillsboro
Litchville Marion
Four Winds
Dakota Adventist Academy
Munich
Williston
Edmore
Hazelton-Moffit-Braddock
Milnor
Tioga

Avery - During the We the People program, I think some benefits were getting more comfortable publicly speaking, using your time given wisely to your advantage, answering on-the-spot questions which can prepare you for future interviews, and overall confidence because you didn't want to show the judges you were nervous while presenting and answering follow up questions.

Elayna - In my personal experience with the We The People competition, I found it very educational and useful. My class spent part of the first semester preparing for the competition, and in doing so, I learned so much about government and the importance of participating in government. This was a valuable experience that overall made me a better citizen.

Tori - In my experience, the We The People program was an excellent way to learn life skills such as teamwork, time management, and public speaking.

Cody - As a student who participated in this competition, I believe that We The People is a great event for schools to be able to participate in, as it helps with many great skills that are required in everyday life. These skills include: organization, teamwork, being able to look and sound confident and professional, being prepared for anything in case something unexpectedly goes wrong, and, most importantly, public speaking.

Isabella - College update: I suppose the point I wanted to make with all this is that I am truly grateful for your teaching. I'm really happy that I am able to go into my classes already having some knowledge of the topics being discussed.