



NEWS RELEASE

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Leah Nixon
(Assistant Director of News Services)

Ferris community celebrates Constitution Week

BIG RAPIDS – Ferris State University is participating in the first Constitution Week to teach students about the United States Constitution and the rights it provides all citizens.

A new law sponsored by Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) and signed by President George W. Bush in April 2005 addresses the concern that many people do not know about the country's governing document. The law designates Sept. 17 through 23 Constitution Week and Sept. 17 Citizenship Day, as well as requires every school that receives federal funds – including universities – to teach students about the Constitution. Federal government agencies also are required to provide education programs to their employees.

“James Madison said it best, ‘Government is of the people, for the people and by the people,’” said Connie Meinholdt, American Democracy Project coordinator and Ferris associate professor of psychology. “When people don’t participate in government nothing happens...the best approach is to engage in community activities for the common good.”

Ferris’ education program kicks off with an information table Sept. 12 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Rankin Center Atrium, where Ferris faculty and administrators will be on hand to discuss the Constitution. The Ferris and Big Rapids communities also may test their Constitution knowledge to be entered into prize drawings. The information table will be open through Sept. 16.

Other events scheduled throughout the week include a community outreach program: “Economic Development, Community Growth and Eminent Domain,” which is being held in Business 111 Sept. 15 at 7 p.m. Panelists include Big Rapids Township Supervisor Maxine McClelland, Mecosta County Development Corp. Director Jonathan Scott, Mecosta County Medical Center Public Relations Manager and Big Rapids City Commissioner Tom Hogenson, eminent domain expert Carole Bos, condemnation expert Scott Timmer and an eminent domain attorney. Panelists will discuss implications of the recent Supreme Court case, *Kelo vs. City of New London*, broadening governments’ ability to transfer ownership of private property, as well as related Michigan state laws. The Fourth Amendment protects people against unreasonable seizures of private property. All events are free and open to the public.

Sheldon Rampton, Center for Media and Democracy director of research, will be speaking Sept. 16 at 11 a.m. in the Rankin Center Doom Room on freedom of speech. Wayne State University Law School Dean Dr. Frank Wu will speak on “The U.S. Constitution and Equal Protection Under the Law” Sept. 20 at 11 a.m. in Science 126.

(Continued)

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Classroom-ready videos also are being shown at noon and 3 p.m. in IRC Auditorium 4 Sept. 16 featuring U.S. Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Stephen Breyer discussing the importance of the Constitution, as well as other relevant topics. On Sept. 16 at 1:30 p.m., NPR's Margot Adler will present an hour-long, video-cast looking at censorship in textbooks, libraries and on the Internet.

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