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Hundreds of Central Valley Students To Attend Supreme Court Session in Fresno

Cases Involve Tuition for Undocumented Students, Cell Phone Search, and Death Penalty Appeals

San Francisco—Hundreds of high school students in Central California will have the opportunity to watch the California Supreme Court argue cases of statewide importance at a special session on October 5–6, 2010, at the Court of Appeal Courthouse, 2424 Ventura Street, Fresno.

“For the ninth consecutive year, the Supreme Court is pleased to participate in this extraordinary educational event for California high schools,” stated Chief Justice Ronald M. George, who launched the programs almost a decade ago. “The goal is to inspire students to learn more about our state’s justice system and to provide a rare view of how the appellate courts work. Students will be able see oral arguments in person, on television, or online, and will have access to detailed educational materials about each case the court considers.”

It will be the second time in nine years that the court will hold a statewide educational session in Fresno. The October session will be hosted by the Court of Appeal for the Fifth Appellate District.

Statewide and Regional TV Broadcasts

Students will attend from all nine counties that comprise the Fifth Appellate District—Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Stanislaus, Tulare and Tuolumne. The entire two-day proceeding will be televised live on Valley Public Television (www.kvpt.org/courtoutreach) and the California Channel (www.calchannel.com), a public affairs cable network that reaches 5.6 million viewers statewide.

The Supreme Court has posted online briefs and expanded summaries in each case to be argued to aid students’ understanding of the legal issues.

A curriculum also is being developed by the Fresno County Office of Education and will be made available online to schools statewide.

The Fresno County Office of Education and Valley Public Television have partnered with the Fifth Appellate District to make the regional broadcast of oral arguments accessible to as many students as possible in the nine-county area that the Court of Appeal serves.

Cases to Be Argued

The Supreme Court will hear arguments in three civil cases and five criminal cases during its two-day special session, starting at 9:00 a.m. each day.

The first case involves a legal challenge to a 2001 state law that allows high school graduates without lawful immigration status to pay in-state tuition to attend state colleges and universities, rather than out-of-state tuition, which is more costly. Two other civil cases concern a lawsuit over unpaid wages, and the “private attorney general” statute, which allows litigants to recover legal fees for bringing actions that benefit the general public.

The justices also will hear arguments in criminal cases that involve the right to a speedy trial; the legality of a police search of a defendant’s cell phone text messages; and a rape case that focuses on a law providing greater punishment for crimes committed as part of gang-related activity. Two death penalty cases—which are automatically reviewed directly by the state’s high court—involve the admission of evidence that the defendant committed prior crimes, and the “felony murder rule,” which provides that a homicide committed during the course of certain felonies constitutes first degree murder.

To view the Supreme Court’s entire October calendar, see <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/calendars/documents/SOCT10.PDF> . The expanded case summaries and legal briefs in each case are posted at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme/oralarg-1010.htm> .

Pooling arrangements for TV and radio stations will be available outside the Fresno Court of Appeal building. For information on satellite coordinates, please call California Channel at 916-444-9792.