

Supreme Court Hosts World Visitors

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Members of the Icelandic Bar Association, students from Mills College, Norwegian Supreme Court justices, high school students from Sacramento, Teen Court participants from Lassen County, the Chief Justice of Nepal, judicial delegations from Pakistan, France, and China, and high school civics teachers from throughout California are but a few groups that have toured the California Supreme Court in recent months, thanks in large measure to a grant from the California Supreme Court Historical Society.

Recognizing the need to provide groups and interested individuals with greater access to and more information about the California Supreme Court and its beautifully restored San Francisco headquar-

ters, the court applied to the Society for a grant to fund the reproduction of printed materials and the court's introductory video, "Inside the Supreme Court" for wide distribution to students, teachers, judges and court personnel, and others who visited the court or participated in its outreach efforts.

The California Supreme Court Historical Society's grant was a key ingredient in expanding the Supreme Court's tour program and outreach efforts at a time when budget resources were scarce and the court's ability to offer visitors printed materials about the court was very limited. Now, several times a month, groups and individuals learn about the operation and history of the Supreme Court and California's judicial system.

Whenever possible, the Supreme Court tour begins in the boardroom of the Judicial Council, which is located in the Hiram Johnson Building adjacent to the Supreme Court in the State's Civic Center Complex. There, visitors are introduced to California's three-tier court structure, the governance role of the Judicial Council, and the support mission of the Administrative Office of the Courts. The presentation then focuses on the Supreme Court, with the viewing of the video "Inside the Supreme Court" (the video is available on the court's Web site at: <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme/educational.htm>).



The Supreme Court's San Francisco courtroom in the historic Earl Warren Building with the Court in session during Oral Argument.

PHOTO: WILLIAM A. PORTER

After an opportunity for questions and answers, the tour moves across the Great Hall, in the center of the complex, to the fourth floor courtroom in the Earl Warren Building. There, visitors are offered a more detailed explanation of how a case reaches the California Supreme Court, and how the court operates with its weekly conferences, the granting of review, oral argument, the assignment, preparation and circulation of proposed opinions, and finally, the process of filing the court's decisions. Information is also provided about the justices, their nomination and confirmation process, their terms of office and judicial confirmation elections, along with the history of the court's headquarters in San Francisco, and the oral argument sessions in Los Angeles and Sacramento. The court's recent practice of convening for oral argument at various locations throughout the state to provide educational outreach and the opportunity for high school students to attend oral argument is also discussed.

Now, at the conclusion of each tour, and at the court's oral argument sessions, visitors are routinely provided with printed materials about the history and operation of the California Supreme Court—thanks in large measure to the impetus provided by the California Supreme Court Historical Society's grant.

To schedule a tour, call (415) 865-7597.

