



Summer 2009

Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center Educator Newsletter

## CALENDAR

- Sept 2 Administrative Conference and Public Hearing
- Sept 4 Michigan Hall of Justice Closed Due to Furlough (Unpaid) Day
- Sept 17 Constitution Day Celebration at the Learning Center
- Oct 6–7 Oral Arguments
- Oct 8 Administrative Conference
- Nov 3–4 Oral Arguments
- Nov 5 Oral Arguments and Administrative Conference
- Dec 8–9 Oral Arguments
- Dec 10 Oral Arguments and Administrative Conference

\*Michigan Supreme Court Oral Arguments, Public Hearings, and Administrative Conferences are broadcast on Michigan Government Television (MGTV). See [www.mgtv.org](http://www.mgtv.org) for dates and times.



Students with Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly for the Constitution Day webcast.

## Constitution Day, September 17 Special Tours, Online Resources

Every year, schools and other organizations across the United States celebrate Constitution Day, honoring the document that establishes the federal government and the rights of citizens.



- The Learning Center will offer **special tours** on **Thursday, September 17**. Call 517-373-7171 to schedule your Constitution Day tour.
- For **grades kindergarten–5**, a new 13-minute, pre-recorded **webcast with Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly** and elementary students is available. Curriculum materials are included with the program. The materials and the webcast are available online at:

<http://ustools.you-niversity.com/youtools/companies/mji/archivesLayout2.html>.

## Tour the Learning Center in 2009–2010 Schedule Up to a Year in Advance

Are your school and curriculum calendars set for the year? If so, we encourage you to plan ahead for your visit to the Michigan Supreme Learning Center. Tours can be scheduled up to a year in advance, and popular times for tours, especially those in the spring, book up quickly.

Tours include the following choices:

- Michigan's Judicial Branch of Government (General Tour, Grade Specific)
- The Judicial Branch and Core Democratic Values (3rd–6th Grades)
- President Lincoln and Core Democratic Values (4th–6th Grades)
- Special Topics (with Advance Notice)

To reserve a tour for your group, call 517-373-7171 or visit the Learning Center web site at <http://courts.michigan.gov/plc/reservations.htm>.



## In Brief

### Michigan Constitution of 1963

#### What Is the Purpose of a Constitution?

A constitution is the basic law of a nation or state. It organizes the government, gives it authority, and defines its powers. A constitution rules the actions and decisions of the government, and no laws may contradict a constitution. In the United States, constitutions are written documents; however, some countries, such as Great Britain, function with unwritten constitutions. In very simple terms, a constitution is like a recipe for government.

#### Our State Constitution

Michigan's current constitution was approved by the voters in 1963, following a constitutional convention in 1961–1962. It is composed of a preamble and 12 articles plus temporary provisions that ensured a smooth transition from the constitution of 1908 to that of 1963.

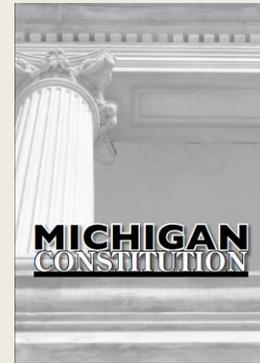
- Article 1 – Declaration of Rights (similar to the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution)
- Article 6 – Judicial Branch
- Article 12 – Amendment and Revisions

#### General Revision Ballot Question, November 2010

Every 16 years, a question regarding the general revision of the state constitution is posed during the general election (Const 1963, Art 12, Sec 3). This question will appear on the November 2, 2010, ballot. In 1978 and 1994, voters turned down similar proposals; however, numerous attempts to amend sections of the state constitution during the past several years has led to speculation that a constitutional convention may be approved.

#### Full Text Available Online

The full text of the Michigan Constitution is available online from the state legislature's web site at <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/>. At the far left of the web page, click on "Constitution Search" for a searchable version or "Publications" for a printable version.



#### Article 1, Section 1

**"All political power is inherent in the people. Government is instituted for their equal benefit, security and protection."**

#### Article 6, Section 1

**"The judicial power of the state is vested exclusively in one court of justice which shall be divided into one supreme court, one court of appeals, one trial court of general jurisdiction known as the circuit court, one probate court, and courts of limited jurisdiction that the legislature may establish[.]"**

#### Best of the Web CONSTITUTION DAY



#### Elementary – Scholastic News Online, Celebrate Constitution Day

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/collection.jsp?id=391>  
Articles and activities related to the Constitution.

#### Middle School – Our Courts: 21st Century Civics

<http://ourcourts.org/>

Inspired by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, this interactive web site teaches civics and encourages students to be active citizens. Under "Play Games," the "Supreme Decision" game discusses First Amendment rights.

#### High School – Teaching American History, Constitutional Convention

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/convention/>

Essays, visual interpretations, an interactive map of Philadelphia, and links to primary sources.