

WE THE PEOPLE NATIONAL FINALS 2022

This past weekend, April 23 through 24, I witnessed the **Massachusetts** championship team, **Easthampton High School We the People** students, who competed in the National Finals. Even though the event was virtual, the community support enabled these students to travel to Washington, DC to participate in the competition. They huddled together at a Marriott Hotel on the outskirts of DC and between their competitive hearings they visited many of the landmarks of our nation's capital and traveled through the area enjoying the beauty of the capital.

But, they were totally focused on the competition. On Saturday morning they eagerly gave their presentations and responded to the follow-up questions with fervor, intensity, poise and evidence to support their arguments each and every time. Each time, in the judges' feedback, they commended them on their understanding, their passion, and their incredible grasp of the difficult concepts that they discussed. Similarly, on Sunday morning they continued their mission in the same manner. Their ability to give clear, concise and application of their knowledge to the questions from the judges was inspiring. Each and every student on each panel of students was engaged and participated extraordinarily well. The beauty of this group of students is that no one student did well because everyone did well.

It came as no surprise to me that on Sunday evening, this **Massachusetts** team was selected as one of the 12 teams to go forward into the third day of competition on Monday. On Monday afternoon, they once again sat down and delivered the presentation to one of the questions and responded to the judges' questions for 10 minutes instead of the 8 minutes from the first two days. They continued to do very well. Last night at the Awards Ceremony, Tuesday, April 26th at 8 pm, the **Massachusetts** team learned that they had placed 11th in the nation. We are so proud of this achievement.

What the students are able to display at these competitions is outstanding. We salute all the competing teams, their teachers, and those who help the teams in preparation as well as those who compete at the state level for all their hard work. Each year I ask students who are involved whether it is worth their while to do this. I've never heard a student say "No", despite all the hard work beyond the normal classwork. Typically, students, years after their involvement in *We the People*, will remember fondly their experience, a testament to the importance of this genuine learning experience.

Congratulations to an extraordinary team from **Easthampton High School, 2022!**

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