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High School Students to Debate the Balance of Personal Freedom and Security with LA County Judges and Attorneys During LACBA's Dialogues on Freedom

The program uses real-world situations to ask students whether parents, teachers and law enforcement officials have a right and obligation to monitor students' activity in and out of school

LOS ANGELES – April 26, 2017 – More than 85 judges and attorneys will visit classrooms across Southern California to lead high school students in debates about freedom, civil liberties and the American system of government on Thursday, April 27, and Friday, April 28, 2017, as part of the Dialogues on Freedom, a collaboration of the Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA), the Los Angeles Superior Court and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

Dialogues on Freedom was founded in 2002 by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The program was created to provide students with an opportunity to explore the concepts of freedom, law and justice by putting them into scenarios that students might experience at school, at home or in their neighborhoods.

"Our Court and judges are honored to participate in the Dialogues on Freedom program. Our judicial system and our community directly benefit when all citizens, but especially young adults, better understand and appreciate the impact of the Constitution on our daily lives and freedoms," said Los Angeles Superior Court Presiding Judge Daniel J. Buckley.

LACBA President Margaret P. Stevens added, "Students sometimes take our cherished freedoms for granted, without understanding the importance of these freedoms to their daily lives and their futures. The goal of Dialogues on Freedom is to provide them with a perspective they haven't yet encountered. For many, it will be their first opportunity to discuss with a lawyer or a judge the fundamental and unique legal building blocks of American society. We hope this program will spark their interest in the legal system and maybe even in the legal profession."

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This is the 16th year Dialogues on Freedom will bring judges and attorneys into LAUSD classrooms, using topics such as free speech, the right to privacy, dress codes and social media posts to encourage students to consider how the concepts of freedom, law and justice impact their daily lives. There are no wrong or right answers. Students have an opportunity to share their opinions with each other as to whether teachers, principals, city officials or police have the right and/or obligation to intervene in situations students view as an infringement on their personal freedom.

This year's scenarios include:

- Suspending a student who violated the school's anti-bias rule by yelling a gay slur at a high school football game;
- Police administering a breathalyzer test to a group of students suspected of drinking at a school picnic;
- Suspending students for a Halloween-related Facebook post stating "Blood will flow in the hallways";
- Requiring students to wear a Smart ID Card containing a GPS locator chip that allows school staff to track the location of students on and off campus; and
- Do schools have the right to load laptops that are part of a laptop loaner program with spyware that can monitor and record student activities at home.

The high schools participating in this year's Dialogues on Freedom, include: Banning, Belmont, Dorsey, Esteban Torres, Fairfax, Franklin, Humanities & Arts (HArts) Academy of Los Angeles (Harbor City), Lincoln (Leadership in Entertainment and Media Arts), Los Angeles County Probation Department's Dorothy Kirby Center in Commerce, Mendez Learning Center, Monroe, Narbonne, North Hollywood, School of the Visual Arts on RFK Campus, San Fernando, University and Wilson.

To learn more, visit www.lacba.org/dialogues

About the Los Angeles County Bar Association

The Los Angeles County Bar Association (LACBA) is one of the largest voluntary metropolitan bar associations in the nation, with more than 18,000 members. LACBA is engaged in advancing the administration of justice and meeting the professional needs of lawyers. For more information on LACBA, visit www.lacba.org.

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