



We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution National Finals

Rules and Eligibility for Academic Year 2025-2026

The We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution National Finals is the Center for Civic Education's national culminating event dedicated to fostering broad participation by students from every U.S. state, district, and territory. The program promotes authentic classroom civic learning experiences that prepare students for informed, engaged citizenship. The majority of students in the We the People program participate in school, district, or state-level competitions. These local and state-level hearings are where students truly experience the deepening of their civic knowledge. The Center honors this learning by providing the We the People National Finals, allowing high-performing teams to showcase their understanding of constitutional principles and civic skills at the national level.

These rules outline the eligibility criteria and participation guidelines for the We the People National Finals during the 2025–2026 academic year. They are intended to ensure a fair, inclusive, and high-quality experience for all participating students, teachers, and schools. While the National Finals primarily feature teams representing schools with established We the People programs through inclusion in scheduled classes, we recognize that not all states have fully developed programs in every district or school.

I. State-Level Team Eligibility

- A. Each state is responsible for establishing its own criteria for participation in regional and state-level We the People competitions.
- B. A state's winning team may attend the National Finals as the official state representative, provided they meet all eligibility requirements.
- C. Each state may send one official team to the National Finals, typically the winner of the state-level competition.
- D. Teams from states without a qualifying competition or lacking the support of a state coordinator may request to send a team, provided that the team meets all eligibility requirements and has demonstrated a baseline level of program implementation.
 1. Teams must have completed at least one in-school or local-level We the People hearing prior to the National Finals to ensure that students are adequately prepared for the experience. Teachers from these states must contact the Center in advance to coordinate participation and confirm eligibility.
 2. If more than one school expresses interest in representing the state, the Center will determine how to proceed, which may include internal review or consultation with potential partners in the state.



II. We the People Team Eligibility

A. Rostered Class Teams

1. Composed of all students enrolled in a course where We the People is implemented at the school they represent.
2. Rostered We the People classes should be designed to provide broad access to interested students whenever possible, consistent with the school's academic policies and scheduling practices.

B. Club Teams

1. Schools where the We the People program has not been part of a scheduled class may form a club team as a starting point in the creation of a rostered We the People class.
2. Club teams must have completed the We the People curriculum under the supervision of an advisor or coach.
3. Students in the club team must all attend the same school.
4. Club teams based at schools without an established We the People program may participate in their state competition in accordance with state-level eligibility rules. If a club team wins its state competition, it may advance to the National Finals provided it meets all team eligibility requirements outlined below.
5. State coordinators should foster the inclusion of club teams from schools where the We the People program is not yet established in a rostered class while supporting the transition to a class-based team, as possible, as the program develops.

C. Combined-School Teams:

1. At the request of the state coordinator, a state may send a team composed of two small teams from that state to ensure that state's participation in the National Finals.
2. The combined-team roster should follow the rostered class requirements for both teams.

D. Wild Card Teams

1. The We the People National Finals can currently accommodate up to 48 student teams. If space remains after confirming state winners, the Center may invite additional teams from states that have opted in to the wild-card pool.
2. State coordinators must opt in each year by a specified date to be considered for a wild-card invitation.
3. The number of wild-card spots available varies from year to year, and states are not guaranteed a wild-card invitation, even if they have opted in.
4. Wild-card teams must come from a different school than the official state team.
5. State coordinators are responsible for selecting the wild-card team based on its performance at the state-level competition and its potential to represent the state well at the National Finals.
6. Club teams are eligible for wild-card participation.



E. Scholarship Teams

1. The Center may offer scholarship-based participation opportunities to schools that meet specific high-needs criteria, with the goal of expanding access and supporting educational equity.
2. The current scholarship program includes the John Lewis Class, a designation awarded to one team per year. State coordinators must submit teams for John Lewis Class consideration, following the Center's nomination and review process.
3. Scholarship teams are expected to meet all competition requirements and will participate fully in the National Finals alongside state and wild-card teams.
4. The Center may expand scholarship opportunities at its discretion based on funding availability and program expansion priorities.

III. Individual Student Eligibility

- A. All students must be enrolled in a high school in grades 9–12 at the time of their participation in the National Finals.
- B. Students must reside in or attend school in the state they represent.
- C. Students who have participated in We the People simulated congressional hearings before high school (e.g., in middle or elementary school) may still participate in National Finals.
- D. Students may only compete in the National Finals once during their high school years, even if their class or club participates in the National Finals multiple times.
- E. Returning students may support teams in noncompetitive roles, such as student coaches or mentors.

IV. Team Composition (All Teams)

- A. Each participating team should include a minimum of nine (9) students, with the goal of distributing students evenly across six (6) unit panels, with a minimum of three (3) students per panel.
- B. In exceptional cases, the Center may grant a waiver to allow participation with fewer than nine (9) students. Waiver requests must be submitted in advance and are subject to Center approval.
- C. There is no formal maximum team size, but the Center generally recommends a team size of no more than 36 students to support equitable participation and manageable group sizes.
- D. Each team must respond to all six (6) unit questions. To do so, the team must be divided into six groups, with each group assigned to testify on one unit.
- E. Each unit group must include at least three (3) students, and unit group sizes should be as evenly distributed as possible.
- F. Students may testify on more than one unit only if the team includes fewer than 18 students. In such cases, no student may testify on more than two unit panels, unless the team has received a waiver from the Center for a reduced team size.