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Middle School Students Can Enter National Civics Contest Launched by Retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and Verizon Foundation

Contest, to Begin on Constitution Day, Is Aimed at Renewing the Teaching of Civic Engagement; Winning Class Will Receive VGo Robot

PHILADELPHIA – September 16, 2011 – Retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and the [Verizon Foundation](#) are celebrating [Constitution Day](#) (www.constitutionday.com) by launching a national contest for middle schools to renew the teaching of civic engagement.

The contest, [Civic Impact Challenge](#), involves using iCivics, an online education project that O'Connor spearheaded, to teach students civics and encourage them to learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens and to understand the workings of the U.S. government.

"Students need education and inspiration to understand how they fit into today's democratic process," said O'Connor. "The Civic Impact Challenge and iCivics are much more than classroom lessons - they prepare students to become responsible citizens of a democracy and engaged participants in civil society. We want students to see that they can start getting involved today, whether through student government, volunteerism or other activity."

The [Civic Impact Challenge](#) contest is open to fifth-grade to 12th-grade classrooms across the country and ends Nov. 30, 2011. Starting immediately, teachers can enroll their class by visiting www.iCivics.org/Impact-Challenge-2011. The [official rules](#) can be found at: <http://www.icivics.org/impact-challenge-2011-official-rules>.

Classes participating in the contest will earn "impact points" by playing any of 14 civics games that are part of the [iCivics](#) curriculum, all accessible from school or at home at www.icivics.org/games. These games cover such topics as civil rights, how a bill becomes a law, and the role of local government. The class that earns the most impact points between Oct. 3 and Nov. 30 will win a [VGo telepresence robot](#). The VGo robot enables students to take virtual field trips to museums and educational institutions and host multicultural learning experiences with

classrooms abroad. It also gives home-bound students an opportunity to participate in classroom activities. The winning class will also receive a virtual visit from O'Connor and have the chance to talk with the first woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

After the contest, students can donate their earned [impact points](#) to benefit a variety of community projects run by other youth, connecting their classroom civic education to real-world civic participation.

The Civic Impact Challenge is funded through a \$20,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation, which uses its technology, financial resources and partnerships to address critical social issues. The grant also facilitates the availability of iCivics resources on [Verizon Thinkfinity](#), the interactive educational platform that provides tens of thousands of free resources for use in and out of the classroom. The Verizon Foundation has invested more than \$33 million in education initiatives.

"Sandra Day O'Connor is a passionate voice for civics education and an inspiration to teachers and students," said Rose Stuckey Kirk, president of the Verizon Foundation. "The foundation is eager to use Verizon's Thinkfinity.org to bring her vision and exceptional resources to our educators and parents."

Gene Koo, executive director of iCivics, said: "On Constitution Day, every school is required to teach about the Constitution, but in reality schools are preparing young people to become good citizens every single day. I'm excited that we will be able to offer our high-quality games, activities and lesson plans through Thinkfinity.org, reflecting Verizon's commitment to supporting the civic mission of schools."

Content for [Verizon Thinkfinity](#) is provided through a partnership between the Verizon Foundation and [10 of the nation's leading organizations](#) in the fields of education and literacy.

O'Connor to Kick Off Thinkfinity Education Speaker Series

To bring even more resources to educators, the Verizon Foundation has launched the [Thinkfinity Education Speaker Series](#) (www.thinkfinity.org/speakerseries), an online program that will bring some of the most inspiring voices in education to educators and parents. O'Connor will be the first speaker in the series, which launches on Sept. 27.

The series is available exclusively to members of the [Thinkfinity Community](#), a virtual home to engaging, thoughtful dialogue on some of today's toughest classroom issues. Join the Thinkfinity Community for free at www.thinkfinity.org/community.

About iCivics

Founded by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor to revitalize American civic education, iCivics provides free, high-quality learning materials to teachers and students. iCivics has pioneered the use of educational video games and other interactive media to energize learning about government and civil society. iCivics resources have been used by over two million young people in all 50 states. Visit www.iCivics.org to find civic education resources and to learn more.

About the Verizon Foundation

The Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Verizon, uses its technology, financial resources and partnerships to address critical social issues, with a focus on education and domestic violence prevention. In 2010, the foundation awarded nearly \$67 million to nonprofit agencies in the U.S. and abroad. Through Verizon Volunteers, one of the nation's largest employee volunteer programs, Verizon employees and retirees have volunteered nearly 6 million hours of community service since 2000. For more information on the foundation, visit www.verizonfoundation.org.

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