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Circular Letter: C-3

To: Superintendents of Schools

From: Dr. Betty J. Sternberg, Commissioner of Education

Date: August 23, 2005

Subject: Education Programs for U.S. Constitution Day

The Constitution of the United States of America signed on September 17, 1787, represents the most important written document for promoting democratic government in the world today. **A provision enacted by Congress in 2004, requires that all U.S. education facilities receiving federal funds must offer an educational program based on the U.S. Constitution on September 17. Since September 17 falls on a Saturday, schools are required to schedule a program on Friday, September 16, 2005.** Information on the federal requirement and resources can be found on the U.S. Department of Education website at: www.ed.gov.

Connecticut played an important role in the development of the Constitution. The Connecticut Compromise or Great Compromise, proposed by Roger Sherman at the Constitutional Convention, provided for equal representation in the Senate and proportional representation in the House of Representatives. Connecticut is also known as the "Constitution State," so designated by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1959. "Constitution State" is a reference to the Fundamental Orders of 1638/39, claimed to be the first written constitution in history.

In 2001, the Connecticut General Assembly enacted a high school graduation requirement of one-half credit in civics, beginning with the class of 2004. The *Connecticut Social Studies Curriculum Framework*, PreK-Grade 12 serves as a guide to implement the graduation requirement for civics education in grades K-12. In this framework, civics content standard 5, The U.S. Constitution and Government, forms the basis for curriculum development on the Constitution and supporting performance standards can be found on the Connecticut State Department of Education's website at: <http://www.state.ct.us/sde/dtl/curriculum/currkey3.htm>.

While Constitution Day has been designated as a time for educational institutions to focus on the activities and programs related to the Constitution, it is understood that the Constitution is a document fundamental to our democratic way of life and principles embedded in the Constitution should be emphasized in the school curriculum PreK-12 throughout the year.

The Connecticut Consortium for Law and Citizenship Education has mailed a packet to all school principals as part of a statewide effort to provide a common activity for the day. Enclosed is a copy of the packet. For additional information and resources to celebrate the day, go to the Connecticut Consortium for Law and Citizenship website at: www.cclce.org.