

Lock Haven University

Official Release

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Area high school students get an insider look at government, debate constitutional issues

LHU hosts Congressman Glenn Thompson's Government Outreach 2011 and High School Model Constitutional Convention

Lock Haven University played host to area high school students who attended Congressman Glenn "GT" Thompson's Government Outreach 2011. The event, held in the Price Performance Center on Thursday, October 20, included participants from high schools in the 5th Congressional District. Participating high schools were Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Central Mountain, Jersey Shore, Penns Valley, South Williamsport and Philipsburg Osceola.



At the same time, Lock Haven University political science students conducted their annual High School Model Constitutional Convention (ConCon). Participating high schools were Jersey Shore, Sugar Valley and Williamsport.

The purpose of Congressman Thompson's Government Outreach is to give students insight into the role of government in their daily lives and to provide them an opportunity to become familiar with the operations of government by interacting with individuals who make the decisions, influence the decisions, and report those decisions.

The Government Outreach program was begun by Thompson's predecessor, Congressman John Peterson. The program is now in its fifteenth year.

It was a busy day for Congressman Thompson. Before the Government Outreach program, he took the time to address Professor Stanley Berard's class on American National Government, POLI105, and then posed for photographs with every high school group.

The Government Outreach program began with remarks from Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs David L. White. On behalf of President Michael Fiorentino Jr. and the entire university, he welcomed Congressman Thompson to LHU. The Congressman expressed his pleasure at being on the Lock Haven University campus and noted that all three of his sons attended LHU for all or part of their education. He also praised the leadership of President Fiorentino, who was attending a PASSHE presidents' meeting, and thanked Lock Haven University for its continuing support of the Government Outreach program.

In his remarks to the students, Congressman Thompson urged them to focus on their education. "Education is the key to success," he said. He also urged them to take an active role in government.

Congressman Thompson described the "Three P's for Life." Using his own experiences as examples, he explained the importance of Passion, Principles and Purpose. He then invited the students to ask questions, and they seized the opportunity to question him on a wide range of topics, including health care, education, requirements for the military academies, the electoral process, the Marcellus Shale, the environment, and nursing home quality.

The featured speaker was Robb Armstrong, whose syndicated comic strip "Jump Start" runs in more than 450 newspapers in 8 countries. Armstrong is a popular public speaker, and has been recognized for his community outreach by the Governor of Pennsylvania, the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Department of Justice.

Students also heard a talk by Dr. Lawrence (Larry) A. Schardt entitled, "The Magic Moment: Creating a Lifetime of Happiness and Success," and learned about "The Lock Haven Experience."

Also making presentations was Amy Oswald of Joy Mining machinery, one of the Government Outreach sponsors, and Robin Rockey, LHU interim director of admissions, who spoke about The Lock Haven Experience.

The students lunch on campus as guests of the university before boarding their buses for the return trip to school.

While the students in Price Auditorium were listening to the featured speakers, Congressman Thompson took the time to go to the Parsons Union Building to visit with another group of high school students who were participating in ConCon.

ConCon is not a historical reenactment of the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. It is a simulation, set in the present day, in which delegates debate current constitutional issues. Student delegations represent assigned states or territories, and delegations send a representative to each of the three concurrent committee sessions. Each committee examines a different part of the U.S. Constitution and may adopt resolutions, which are placed on the plenary agenda. All the delegates participate in the convention plenary.

Participating high school students gain practical, hands-on experience in public speaking and debate, analyzing and understanding complex issues, critical thinking, writing, parliamentary strategy and tactics, team work, and diplomacy.

At the same time, the Lock Haven University students who organized the event and served as ConCon facilitators gained practical experience in organization, teamwork, communication, leadership and management. ConCon was organized and run by the Lock Haven University Council for Social Studies Club (LHUPCSS). Participating students were Joshua Fishburn, coordinator, and LHUPCSS presiding officers and assistants Monica Barnett, Dan Frank, Tiffany James, Thomas Stark and Zachery Zacharias.

Together, Congressman Thompson's Government Outreach 2011 and LHU's Model Constitutional Convention involved over 225 high school students. Over 150 students participated in Government Outreach and another 75 participated in ConCon.

Lock Haven University is a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), the largest provider of higher education in the commonwealth. Its 14 universities offer more than 250 degree and certificate programs in more than 120 areas of study. Nearly 405,000 system alumni live and work in Pennsylvania.

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