

CORNHUSKER BOY'S AND GIRL'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT, INC.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY PROGRAM FOR GOVERNMENT DAY IN THE COUNTY SEAT

- 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. Registration and Filing of Certificates of Election in County Courthouse
- Students will then report to their individual offices to become familiar with locations of office and the county official with whom they will work for the day.
- 10:00 a.m. General Assembly in District Courtroom. County Chairman presiding.
- Brief statement of greetings and purpose by County Chairman.
- 10:10 a.m. Introduction of School Officials
- 10:20 a.m. Introduction of regular County Officials
- 10:30 a.m. Address: "Aims and Purpose of County Government"
- *11:00 a.m. Announcements: 1) Lunch-time and place
2) Location of offices and facilities
3) Reassemble in courtroom at 4:00 p.m.
4) One from each group to make a short report on activities within that office
5) Miscellaneous
- 11:45 a.m. Administer Oath of Office by County Judge
- 11:55 a.m. Adjourn for lunch.
- 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. Lunch period
- 1:30 p.m. Report to respective county offices.
- 4:00 p.m. Return to courtroom for mock trial.
- 4:40 p.m. Final instructions and announcements.
- County Chairman _____ presiding
- 1) Encourage students to write up reports to be given at school and before clubs, groups and others.
 - 2) Reports by group representatives
 - 3) Correct any misinformation.
 - 4) Appreciation to all participating in this program.
 - 5) Miscellaneous announcements.
 - 6) Adjournment.

NOTE: County Chairman will make certain that time of departure for home is agreeable to school officials and that students will be able to reach destination at a rather early hour.

Variations may be made from this suggested program.

* County Government: sound/slide presentation could be used at this time.

DEPARTMENT OF NEBRASKA
THE AMERICAN LEGION

BOY'S AND GIRL'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

COUNTY GOVERNMENT DAY PREPARES YOUTH FOR CITIZENSHIP OBLIGATIONS

Every four years this great nation of ours allows registered voters an opportunity to go to the polls and make their voices heard in the selection process of our President and in deciding other important issues. Since lowering the voting age to 18, some high school students have played a major role in the outcome of some of these elections.

Many of today's youth go to these polls well informed, and, perhaps, better prepared to cast a ballot than some of us who have voted in elections for several decades.

How could this be you ask? Well, to a great extent it's because of the education process of our fine schools throughout the great state of Nebraska. However, there's a side bar to how our children learn about government and what encourages them to vote come that very important day in November.

It's in reference to a notable program called "County Government Day." Unfortunately, there are still some that are unfamiliar with this program, but if you're interested, read on...

ORIGIN

The Honorable Robert G. Simmons, Nebraska's Chief Justice, proposed to the Directors of Cornhusker Boys' State in 1944 that a study be made of the possibilities of extending governmental instructions and operation to more boys and girls. It was his thought that this effort be established on county and community levels, and that it afford practical experience to a greater number of high school students than could possibly be accommodated in the existing Boys' and Girls' State. A committee was named to explore the suggestion.

Research revealed that there were no precedents for such a program, although isolated cases of similar experiments were found. The committee found that very little textbook material was available. Faced with this situation, the committee decided to continue on the basis that factual data would have to be assembled and a suitable textbook compiled and written.

Six counties were used in the experiment of county government during 1947-48. The reaction was so great that the original committee was determined to see that the movement spread to all 93 counties. In four years, the program was conducted in all counties and had met with much success.

OBJECTIVE

Realizing that an informed citizen will strive to create a more perfect and effective county, state and national government, the committee decided to develop a program of study and practice in county government because that is the portion of government which most closely affects the everyday life of the individual. It was determined that the schools should be the instructing body, and the actual government officials should handle the practical application.

Eleventh graders were originally selected to serve in the six experiments as they were considered to be more mature in judgement, have one additional year in school to develop leadership qualities, and would soon attain working citizenship stature. Also, there would be a close relationship between the county and state program.

SPONSORS

With The American Legion and its Auxiliary being the largest patriotic, non-political, non-sectarian organizations in Nebraska, they were selected to become the sponsoring bodies of this program. This led to the creation of a corporation known as "Cornhusker Boy's and Girl's County Government, Inc.," and the sponsoring bodies have filed the necessary articles and reports with the Secretary of State as a nonprofit organization since 1947.

COOPERATION

Cooperation and endorsement of the program and organization have been given by the Nebraska State Education Association, State Department of Education, conventions of the Nebraska Education Association, the Conference of Superintendents and Principals, and several conferences of County Officials Associations.

The staff of the Department of Nebraska, The American Legion, is charged with the responsibility of organizing and supervising the program in all counties. This staff handles details of the program and coordinates the efforts of all individuals and groups for the best interests of boys and girls in citizenship training through the "County Government Day" program.

ORGANIZATION

As the program begins to unfold each year, an initial meeting of county officials, school administrators, heads of civic organizations, the American Legion and its Auxiliary is held, at which time the program is outlined and all details settled satisfactorily along with the selection of a county chairman.

Quite often, school administrators call upon members of the Nebraska Bar Association for assistance in preliminary instruction on the purposes and function of county government and in handling details of registration, filing for office and conducting the elections.

OPERATION

As one would assume, instruction in the function and operation of county government rests within the school system.

High school students in each of the counties will signify their participation by filing for the various county offices, campaigning for office, and participating in caucuses, conventions and elections.

Upon a given day, each school will send its dully elected and appointed county officials to the county courthouse to participate in the program there. Each regular county official will take charge of the group from the schools that were elected to their office and give them instruction in that particular office. Government Day will be under the overall supervision of the county chairman. A program, banquet and noon speaker will be worked out by the county chairman and the county committee.

Each high school will elect a full complement of county officials.

All students in each high school will be electors. They will participate through party affiliation, registration, campaigns, election and the reports of elected officials. Eventually, each high school graduate will have had four years experience in this program.

FILING, CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS

All students will be qualified to file for the various county offices. In the larger high schools caucuses may be necessary to determine extent of the filing.

Scope of the campaigns will be determined by each candidate and subject to restriction of the school authorities. It is suggested that campaigning be encouraged. Posters should be made and put up. General assemblies could be used as time for campaigning by each party. There will be both the Primary and General Elections with all high school students eligible to vote.

LISTS OF OFFICES

There will be elections held **ONLY** for the offices actually found in your particular county government. The list of county officials includes Clerk, Clerk of the District Court, Register of Deeds, Treasurer, Sheriff, Assessor, Surveyor, Attorney, Public Defender, Commissioners of Supervisors, Judge and Superintendent of Schools. The later two are non-political offices.

Several appointive offices may include the following: Veterans Service officer, Highway Superintendent, Health Director, Civil Defense Director, Weed Control Superintendent, Election Commissioner, and Extension Agent (state employee).

GENERAL

1. Do not allow all to file for one office. Be sure that there are candidates for every office.
2. Members of the Bar Association are willing to assist.
3. There will be no "Write In" candidate
4. There will not be candidates by petition.
5. All candidates must file in person
6. Every office is **IMPORTANT**.

SUMMARY

Chief Justice Simmons stressed that local government "is the very foundation on which the American dream has been built."

The American Legion believes there is no better way to assure the survival of our republic than to train our young people in the ideals and objectives of American government. By teaching youth to understand and appreciate the basic principles involved in the successful management of a democratic society, we can keep American strong and ensure freedom for future generations.

Last year, approximately 66 Counties held a County Government Day in Nebraska. As we enter into a new school year, Posts around the state, in conjunction with their local schools and county offices, are preparing to undertake the familiar role of hosting their 2011-2012 County Government Days.

Additional information is available from a variety of sources. A nearby Legion Post or Unit may already be involved and be willing to share information on procedures.

The Nebraska Association of County Officials, located at 625 South 14th Street, Suite A. Lincoln, NE 68508, (402) 434-5660, has a 30-minute slide presentation on County Government which may be borrowed.

Once the details for the program have been settled, Department Assistant Adjutant Brent Hagel-Pitt should be notified of the date selected for County Government Day and the name and address of the person serving as chairman of the program. This should be done by writing The American Legion, Department of Nebraska, P.O. Box 5205, Lincoln, NE 68505-0205.