

Sacramento High School Visits the Court– for CCN

The Sacramento court welcomes hundreds of students on field trips every year. On this day the senior class of New Technology High School toured the main downtown courthouse. They even got to witness an exercise in free speech, with demonstrators on the courthouse steps. Inside arraignment court, Judge Roman explained day to day operations, he reminded the students about their civic responsibilities:

Hon. Jaime R. Roman, Sacramento Superior Court

“The only duty our country asks of its citizens is jury duty.”

And he took questions from the highly engaged crowd.

“Do you keep a record of every trial?”

“How many hours is the courtroom in operation every day?”

“What makes someone exempt from jury duty?”

Hon. Jaime R. Roman, Sacramento Superior Court

“Your idea of hardship doesn’t necessarily equal legal hardship”

“ Does the person have to know the people for them to be on the jury? No!”

After a spin in the judge’s chair, it was off to the next experience – meeting the presiding judge – who gave them snacks and food for thought. Judge Mize uses clever interactive vignettes to compare the rule of law to the rules in a baseball game.

Hon. James Mize, Sacramento Presiding Judge

“Just like baseball has its official rulebook, our government has a constitution which rules what happens in our country.”

It’s a sports analogy that the kids can relate to.

“Look those are just the rules. I’m the umpire, deal with it.”

Judge Mize stresses the importance of an impartial judiciary.

Hon. James Mize, Sacramento Presiding Judge

“A judge cannot consider any special interest, a judge cannot consider what the voters say! The only thing left for the judge to decide is law. And that’s what makes our system so incredibly unique, so incredibly powerful and so incredibly successful.”

It was eye-opening information for most of these kids – and they got it.

Ariel Boykin-Hudson, New Technology H.S. Senior

“I didn’t know all that. I didn’t know that at all .It’s a difficult job, no easy task. They pretty much have to step out of their own comfort zone and do what’s right for the people.”

All together, a memorable day at the courthouse.

Richard Zachary Smith, New Technology H.S. Senior

“I got to really look inside the courthouse, I got to actually look at what happened, I got to see different roles and I really got to see how things work.”

Ariel Boykin-Hudson, New Technology H.S. Senior

“It was interesting how everything went like it’s way different than TV, I really thought that’s the way it was but it really wasn’t. So it was very interesting.”

An excellent way to bring civics lessons alive! I’m Leanne Kozak reporting for California Courts News.