



# Democracy at the Grass Roots

AS STATE BAR PRESIDENT, my horizons get broadened in ways I never imagined. For example, I was lucky a few months ago to be invited to be a “judge” in the “We the People” competition between high school students, sponsored by the Arizona Bar Foundation. In teams, the students learn details about how our government came to be formed, and they prepare testimony before a political committee. To prepare for the competition, the judges were asked to review a booklet about our founding fathers so that we could ask intelligent questions of the students. As usual, I started preparing the night before the event, but the material was presented in such an interesting fashion that I devoured the information until the wee hours of the morning, despite the fact that I had to be up bright and early (I got up early, but I’m not too sure about the bright).

Let me tell you, there are some really sharp students out there. Of course, they are very smart, but they also are very hard workers. The very best have a great curiosity that feeds their pursuit of knowledge.

We the People is structured at different levels for kids of all ages—even chronologically challenged ones like me. The material is thought-provoking on many levels: Did you know that James Madison, the man who brought the sides together at a crucial time in the early days of the United States, was only 5’ 4” tall? Being one who seldom hits my head on stuff, I like to hear about great short people. It gives me hope.

Of course, I have many hopes. I hope the public discovers what a generally wonderful group of people lawyers are. We generally may be a more objective bunch, able to break very complicated problems down to manageable parts and argue both sides of any issue. We tend to see things in terms of problems to solve, and to most nonlawyers many of us seem just a little less emotional than average. Of course, we’re not less emotional, just trained a little differently.

I’ve been lucky during this year to get to travel all around Arizona, and the country for that matter, and I’ve met many lawyers. And here’s the funny thing: I can’t remember meeting a single lawyer who was not a sincere, likeable soul. I think that says a lot. And among those lawyers, many exhibit the best qualities seen in the We the People students. They are intelligent, cooperative and inquisitive. Not such bad traits to find in a misunderstood profession.

Based on the responses I’ve gotten to past articles, I expect many of you may have comments. Send them to [kirk.karman@azbar.org](mailto:kirk.karman@azbar.org). 📧

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