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CONGRESSWOMAN ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON JOINS DC TEENS FOR SUMMIT ON CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Town hall forum generates lively student debate

WASHINGTON, DC -- Local high school students today joined Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) for the Second Annual Teen Summit on Capital Punishment. The Capitol Hill event, sponsored by the Capital Punishment Education Project (CPEP), also featured a student debate and a lively town hall forum with death penalty experts Kevin Watson of the Law Enforcement Alliance of America and Brian Roberts of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty.

The Summit marked the conclusion of a year-long program rooted in an innovative Web-based death penalty curriculum designed by the Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC) and the Michigan State Communications Technology Laboratory. This is the second year that CPEP, comprised of the Death Penalty Information Center (DPIC), Street Law, Inc., the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) Capital Punishment Project, and the ACLU of the National Capital Area, has hosted this event.

"Capital punishment remains a timely issue, and it's important for our region's young people to have the opportunity to come together and engage in a healthy debate on the death penalty," said Richard C. Dieter, DPIC Executive Director. "It has been a tremendous honor to work with local schools on this issue, and we look forward to a bright future for the CPEP program."

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Today's Teen Summit on Capital Punishment provided students from five local high schools (Ballou High School, Duke Ellington High School for the Performing Arts, Luke C. Moore Academy, Maya Angelou Public Charter School, and School Without Walls) with the opportunity to interact with death penalty experts representing a broad spectrum of experiences and opinions on the issue. The event began with opening remarks by Congresswoman Norton and then featured an exchange of views on capital punishment.

"The death penalty is an important public policy debate," said Diann Rust-Tierney, Director of the ACLU Capital Punishment Project. "This program provides students with the tools to be better citizens by showing them how to become informed and to make decisions based on the facts."

Following the debate, the student audience enjoyed a town hall forum with featured guests Watson and Roberts, who serve as Legislative Directors for the Law Enforcement Alliance of America and the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, respectively. While the men represent opposing views on the death penalty, both agree that the public should make educated decisions about capital punishment and that the student forum was a spirited exchange among the well-informed students.

During the past school year, the CPEP program offered teachers in Washington, D.C. the opportunity to encourage civic participation, critical thinking and the development of research skills by utilizing a topic of current interest. CPEP teachers used the web-based curriculum, available at <http://teacher.deathpenaltyinfo.msu.edu>, and accompanying materials to assist students in an exploration of capital punishment, the arguments for and against its use, as well as the issues of ethics and justice that surround the death penalty. The teachers were also encouraged to use in-classroom experts to address a variety of topics related to capital punishment.

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