

MONTEREY COUNTY, CA

Class 125: "Youth in Democracy"

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The Training Week

July 2003

From Individuals to an Interest Group: Merging Community With Civic Duty

WASHINGTON, DC, July 18 — Twenty-nine students graduated from the Experience In Democracy Leadership Program (EIDLDP) this week, and two lessons stood out from all: namely, the importance of civic responsibility, and the significance of community coalition.

The students of Class 125, representing nine high schools in Monterey County, CA, were quick to realize that possessing the skills and know-how of civic participation in only half the battle. Like the many before them, these students were challenged and tested in order to enable them to accept the civic responsibilities that lie ahead. This sense of empowerment is what the Experience In Democracy Leadership Program is all about. It comes from teaching the values of democracy, building and refining leadership skills, and entrusting them with the duty of civic engagement.

Class 125 learned the meaning of power in politics. They were constantly reminded of the values of education for the future. They were guided to identify and harness their civic agenda, and then given the opportunity to voice their opinion and



The Experience in Democracy Class 125 from Monterey County, CA on the Capitol steps.

their concerns to the key Washington insiders that directly affect their communities.

The students met with Congressman Sam Farr (D-CA) and legislative aides from the office of Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). Each meeting was a successful interaction, as Class 125 took advantage of the opportunity to address their concerns on issues involving immigration, education, labor, and more. They pa-

tiently listened and were sure to challenge the stance and positions their congressional representatives took regarding these issues.

Class 125 also had the unique pleasure to meet with other Washington lawmakers during their visit on Capitol Hill. In the halls of Congress, this compelling group of high school seniors buttonholed Representatives Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) and Mike Honda (D-CA), where they exchanged brief words and pleasantries.

The students from Class 125 showed much resolve in their newfound dedication to make a change in their communities. They formed the dynamic bonds that form the foundation of a new network of



young leaders in Monterey County. Empowered and assertive, they now recognize the importance of civic responsibility as a call that all must answer.

Congratulations Class 125!

Michelle Guzman	Milixa Perez	Janet Pacheco	Manuel Pacheco	Aida Perez	Karen Tostado
Brenda Quintero	Yuliana Gonzales	Miriam Dominguez	Lizeth Vega	Fernando Rivera	Emilio Carranza
Jorge Tapia	Michelle Leon	Ivette Alonzo	Avelina Campos	Maria A. Zarate	Maria Juarez
Luis Alejandro	Yared Marquez	David Dominguez	Alejandra Muñoz	Diana Birrueta	Maria Martinez
Carmela Velasquez	Janet Flores	Juan Carlos Dominguez	Estreya Morales	Siempreviva Haro	
Valerie Osuna*	America Reyes*	* designates chaperone			

Issues Agenda: Class 125, Monterey County, CA

These issues, concerns and solutions (as shown) were developed by EIDLDP Class 125. Their purpose is to make a difference in their communities, and make their communities a better place.

We are students proudly representing the Migrant Education Program from Monterey County in California. We are here to discuss issues that are affecting our community, and we propose the following to Congress:

IMMIGRATION

We propose that drivers' licenses be granted to undocumented workers that have been in the United States for an extended period of time, for example the workers who participated in the Bracero Program.

WELFARE

We propose that Congress review the guidelines for providing welfare, in order to be more aware of their clients' economic needs.

EDUCATION

1. We propose that Congress increase budgets for public schools. The recent budget cuts have resulted in:

- a reduced amount of teachers in our schools, increasing class sizes;
- a reduced amount of qualified teachers for each subject matter, forcing teachers to teach classes they are not prepared for;
- fewer after-school activities such as soccer teams;
- fewer elective courses to choose from, limiting our diversity in education;
- fewer field trips and other recreational activities.

2. We propose that a program be funded where students can discreetly and confidentially go for guidance and information about birth control and pregnancy prevention.

LABOR

1. We propose an increase of the minimum wage to all farm and field workers in the United States.
2. We propose that farm workers be provided with affordable housing and health care.

RECREATION

We propose that more funding be allocated to provide for recreational centers in our county, in order for young people to socialize in a good way and to encourage youth to stay off the streets and away from gangs.

We appreciate you for taken the time out of your busy schedules to listen to our solutions for some of the problems in our community.



Class 125 presents their issues agenda to Legislative Aid Ryan Hunt from the office of Senator Dianne Feinstein.

EIDLDP and the U.S. Department of Agriculture

The Bert Corona Leadership Institute has a long-established relationship with the United States Department of Agriculture, home of the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. The USDA has provided great learning opportunities for EIDLDP students by lending them the insight on services they offer for migrant farmworker families. Class 125 toured the facilities, which include the Animal & Natural Resources Institute, the Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, the Plant Science Institute, and the U.S. National Arboretum. In addition, the Monterey County students learned about the almost limitless career opportunities that the USDA has to offer.



Students meeting with Dr. Edward Knipling, Administrator of the USDA's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.