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**Teachers from California, Michigan, North Carolina
Receive American Civic Education Teacher Awards**

WASHINGTON — Teachers from California, Michigan and North Carolina are recipients of the 2011 American Civic Education Teacher Awards, recognizing their exemplary work preparing young people to become informed and engaged citizens.

The ACETA winners are: Jim Bentley of Foulks Ranch Elementary School in Elk Grove, Calif.; Cindy Jarrett of Durant Road Elementary School in Raleigh, N.C.; and Mark Oglesby of Howell High School in Howell, Mich.

The awards are given annually to elementary and secondary teachers of civics, government and related subjects who have demonstrated exceptional expertise, dynamism and creativity in motivating students to learn about the Constitution, Congress and public policy.

ACETA is sponsored by the Center for Civic Education, the Center on Congress at Indiana University and the National Education Association.

Charles N. Quigley, Executive Director of the Center for Civic Education, praised Bentley, Jarrett and Oglesby for their dedication to teaching young people the fundamental principles, values, and institutions of our constitutional system of government. "It is an honor to recognize teachers who are doing such excellent work molding the civic character of our youth," Quigley said.

Lee Hamilton, Director of the Center on Congress, lauded the awardees for inspiring their students to understand and embrace their civic obligations. "In order to succeed, our representative democracy requires wisdom and action from American citizens. These three teachers bring terrific creativity and energy to the vital task of helping young people gain the knowledge and skills they need to work within the political system to make our nation better."

"NEA commends the awardees for their commitment to helping students learn how to think critically and work collaboratively to solve problems, skills that are essential for America to advance in the 21st century," said National Education Association

President Dennis Van Roekel. "Their commitment to civic education is exemplary and a testament to the professionalism and excellence demonstrated in classrooms across the country every day."

The ACETA winners receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., in July to participate in an educational program that includes visits to the Capitol, the National Archives and the U.S. Supreme Court, and meetings with congressional staff and other key officials. They will formally receive their award at a dinner in their honor on July 17.

The three awardees share a passion for explaining democracy and citizenship in an engaging way, and helping young people see that what goes on in local, state and federal government is relevant to their lives.

In his self-portrait essay, Jim Bentley wrote that he works in his classroom to "blend math, science, reading, writing, research, public speaking and critical thinking with civics...My students learn that if they want to be taken seriously, they need to be serious; if they want to engage professionals on issues concerning policy, they themselves need to be professional. My methods are meant to empower students, to show them they can make a difference, that youth is not a hindrance." A graduate of California Polytechnic State University, Bentley has been teaching for 16 years.

Cindy Jarrett wrote that her guiding principle is "Children learn by doing. I believe that empowering children to take charge is essential to good civic education. I encourage my students to ask questions, share ideas, and solve problems collaboratively. I try to make my classroom a microcosm of the world that my students will face as adults...We must teach our children the importance of civic virtue and help them learn to become leaders." Jarrett, who has taught for 27 years, did her undergraduate work at the University of Arkansas, and earned a Master's degree from Winona State University.

Mark Oglesby wrote, "My goal is to encourage and challenge my students to gain the knowledge, participatory skills and civic disposition they need to be competent, responsible citizens...Public schools are central to good citizenship; we must foster an understanding of the nation's fundamental principles, because our representative government can only survive if we have an enlightened citizenry." Oglesby, who did his undergraduate work at the University of Nevada-Reno and earned a Master's degree from Eastern Michigan University, has been teaching for 18 years.

Each year the ACETA program selects and showcases three teachers whose students represent the diversity of the American public and private school systems. Applicants must be full-time classroom teachers of grades K-12. There is no fee to apply. In addition to a two-page self-portrait essay, applicants must submit three letters of recommendation — two from teaching peers and one from their school principal.

With the recognition this year of Bentley, Jarrett and Oglesby, the ACETA program has now honored 18 teachers since the awards were first given in 2006. The previous ACETA awardees:

Nate Breen (Cheyenne Central High School, Cheyenne, Wyo.)
Sally Broughton (Monforton Elementary School, Bozeman, Mont.)
Christopher Cavanaugh (Plainfield High School, Plainfield, Ind.)
Cheryl Cook-Kallio (Irvington High School, Fremont, Calif.)
Mary Ellen Daneels (Community High School, West Chicago, Ill.)
Barbara Simpson Ector (Cleveland Middle School, Cleveland, Tenn.)
Kevin Fox (Arcadia High School, Arcadia, Calif.)
Milton Hyams (Incline High School, Incline Village, Nev.)
Tamara Johnson (Kettle Moraine High School, Wales, Wis.)
Julie Kuhnhein (Highlands High School, Fort Thomas, Ky.)
Galelyn McElroy (Central High School Magnet Career Academy, Louisville, Ky.)
Donna Paoletti Phillips (Robert Frost Middle School, Rockville, Md.)
Sarah Ann Richardson Turpin (Clemson Elementary School, Clemson, S.C.)
Jackie Viana (Hialeah Gardens Middle School, Hialeah Gardens, Fla.)
Gregory Walsh (Falls Church High School, Falls Church, Va.)

To learn more about ACETA, visit the Web sites of the sponsoring organizations.

About the Center for Civic Education (www.civiced.org)

The Center for Civic Education is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization dedicated to fostering the development of informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to values and principles fundamental to American constitutional democracy.

About the Center on Congress (www.centeroncongress.org)

The Center on Congress is a nonpartisan educational institution established in 1999 to help improve the public's understanding of Congress and to encourage civic engagement. It is supported in part by the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at IU Bloomington.

About NEA (www.nea.org)

The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers.

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