

## Mock election provides voting experience

By JOSHUA HOLLINS

The theme of making your voice heard has been prevalent throughout the 2008 Presidential Election. This held true for students at Baton Rouge High and thousands of students around the state as they participated in the 2008 Mock Presidential Election.

Students were given the opportunity to either vote electronically or by paper. Before students went to the polls they were encouraged by a Public Service Announcement created by Baton Rouge Magnet High students.

Baton Rouge Magnet High students Tyler Reames, Jake Stuart, Alex Weltman, and Rachel Williams collaborated together on a PSA in the Geaux Vote Video Contest. The students won first place.

Another group consisting of Dina Blokhin, Zoe Cuneo, Torrance Latham, Melanie Addy, and Austin Arceneaux won fourth place in the contest. Together the students received an award of \$600 in Best Buy Gift Cards.

The PSA's were estimated to reach about 50,000 kids from around the state.

The PSA's received media attention locally. The students that created the PSA's were interviewed by the NBC local affiliate.

Also interviewed was Student Government President John Pierre Lafluer about his involvement in organizing the mock election at BRHS.

When asked about the significance of the election Lafluer said, "I'm glad that they are making this an opportunity to find out what the youth think about the election."

The students were invited to attend a mock election celebration at the Old State Capitol. They joined hundreds of students from around the state for the festivities, and were accompanied by Administrative Dean Tiffany Quiett. See **ELECTION**, page 6

## Constitution Day poll results show student opinion

By ALAINA SINCLAIR

National Constitution Day takes place every year on September 17.

This year, a poll was administered in social studies classes to determine what proposed amendments to the constitution Baton Rouge Magnet High School students would support.

Out of 292 polls administered, the issue that the student body chose that would make a desirable amendment to the constitution was prohibiting discrimination based on gender. This amendment received a majority of 266 votes.

The amendment that was supported the least was allowing Congress and the president to declare war on terrorist groups as well as sovereign nations. This proposed amendment received only 64 votes.

Junior Emily Maverick said, "I think polls like this one are helpful in exposing kids to current issues, but I also think

schools should incorporate more current events into their curriculums, such as debates, news headlines, and international affairs."

Teacher Fred Aldrich, who attended a workshop focused on changing the Constitution at

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**Sheronda Webb**

American History Teacher

the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia last summer and created the poll.

"The biggest constitutional question is whether the constitution is meant to be taken literally, exactly the way it was written 200 years ago, or whether it should change to

meet the times," he said.

Aldrich feels that the constitution should be updated, "It has to change somehow because there are issues today that didn't exist when the constitution was written. Questions regarding abortion or the Internet are good examples."

Aldrich created the constitutional poll to go along with a curricular unit, but because of the time lost at school due to hurricanes Gustav and Ike, it was never taught.

Sheronda Webb, history and African American studies teacher, said, "My students possess a tremendous amount of potential to make changes in the government due to the fact that they are being educated in the issues now, so that when the time comes to vote they will be ready."

Webb also said, "This day (Constitution Day) is important because it celebrates the most important document in our nation's history. It isn't celebrat-

ed enough."

The main purpose for Constitution Day is to create habits of citizenship in each coming generation of Americans. The law creating the holiday was enacted in 2004. Before this law was enacted, Constitution Day was known as Citizenship Day.

Maverick said, "I think National Constitution Day reminds people of the foundation of our country's government, and it reminds us to be grateful for the freedoms we have."

One amendment on the poll, prohibiting same-sex marriage, received 79 votes and an anonymous comment as well.

Under the amendment, one student wrote, "That's your choice, but know that man is meant for woman and woman is meant for man. This is why people of the same sex cannot have children (I mean without surgery or scientific or technical changes.)"

**See poll results below**

## Trip to provide historic opportunities



Benjamin Franklin and other signers of the Constitution are portrayed in statues at the National Constitution Center. (Photo courtesy of Clara Cantu)

By MARIN SAIZON

44 students plus teachers Jennifer Lopez, Sheronda Webb, Tiffany Hingle-Moore, and Latrecia Tate will be going on a six-day trip to Pennsylvania in late May.

"Philadelphia is a historical city with prominent colonial people such as Benjamin Franklin," Webb said. "I feel this is a great experience to see students learning more hands-on things."

The whole trip will cost \$900 and include 20 activities such as candlelight ghost tour and visiting the liberty bell, U.S. Mint, Independence Hall, and the Franklin Institute.

"I'm not too familiar with the city all that much. I heard the night life is good there," junior Tyler Reames said. "I just want to take a ton of pictures. A literal ton, which is 2,000 pounds of pictures."

The Pennsylvania trip will include juniors and seniors. Students had an opportunity to sign up on a first come-first serve basis. A \$150 deposit was due by October 31 along with the participation contract.

The group will leave on a charter bus on May 22 at 7 a.m., and arrive in Pennsylvania the following day, staying at the Holiday Inn Historic District.

## Constitution Poll Results

293 BRMHS students were asked if they would favor a constitutional amendment on the listed issues. The following chart lists the number of votes in favor of each amendment.

- Tightening control over sale and possession of firearms – 161
- Protecting a human fetus from the moment of conception – 120
- Extending first amendment freedom of the press to electronic and cyber media (radio, television, the Internet) – 147
- Abolishing the Electoral College and electing the President by popular vote – 120
- Lowering the voting age to 16 – 108
- Declaring national election days a national holiday – 178
- Extending automatic citizenship to all immigrants, legal and illegal, who live in the U.S. for at least seven years, pay taxes and have no criminal record – 135
- Prohibiting discrimination based on gender – 266
- Prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation – 227
- Extending presidential powers to protect the nation in the face of terrorism, including the power to suspend habeas corpus and Miranda rights, as well as using military tribunals or other exceptional courts to try cases – 71
- Allowing Congress and the president to declare war on terrorist groups as well as sovereign nations – 64 votes
- Prohibiting same-sex marriage – 79