



News Release

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NMCC Constitution Day celebration honors members of the U.S. Military serving around the world

Aroostook County - In a ceremony marking the 219th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution, the Maine State Veterans of Foreign Wars Color Guard joined with members of the Northern Maine Community College community in the campus Library September 18 for a commemoration that mirrored festivities at various venues around the country.

Constitution Day is an American federal holiday that recognizes the ratification of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1878. Because that date fell on a Sunday this year, the holiday was observed on Monday.

The NMCC event followed the same agenda as the official national celebration, led this year by former Secretary of State Colin Powell at the Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Northern Maine Community College students, faculty, staff and the VFW all actively participated in the celebration.

Festivities began with NMCC student Michael Black's rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner" on her violin. The celebration was followed by David Raymond, NMCC arts and sciences faculty member, who recited the preamble of the Constitution, which just as the national reading, was dedicated to and read in honor of members of the U.S. military serving all around the world.

As part of that tribute, Catherine Chapman, a college staff member who's significant other Dave Guerrette is an active duty Maine National Guardsmen serving in Kuwait, read a "roll call of the 50 states". Chapman read the first thirteen states in the order in which they ratified the Constitution and the remaining 37 in the order in which they were admitted to the Union. This action again replicated what occurred at the national event.

The celebration concluded with the ringing of a bell, provided by the Presque Isle Fire Department. The bell rung by NMCC student Becky York 13 times, once for each of the original states ratifying the constitution, coincided with the "Bells Across America" portion of the commemoration led from Valley Forge that honored the First Amendment's guarantees of freedom of speech and religion.

Throughout the celebration, Maine VFW Color Guard Members Don Pelkey of Fort Fairfield, John Bouchard of Fort Kent, Lester Dubois of Fort Kent, and Douglas Michaud of Caribou proudly displayed the U.S. and State of Maine Flags.

“We were so grateful that local veterans joined us for this important event. Their presence served as a vivid reminder that were it not for their efforts, the vision laid forth by our nation’s forefathers in the Constitution would not have survived for over 200 years. It was especially meaningful for our students, faculty and staff to welcome these heroes and to pay tribute to those currently serving,” said Jason Parent, NMCC director of development and college relations.

In addition to the event on Monday, the College library is marking Constitution Day with an exhibit of books and videos related to the Constitution. Approximately 35 publications and videos featuring how the Constitution came to be, how it has been amended and how it is being interpreted will be on display all week.

“The Constitution truly provides us with the fundamental background on how we make decisions on what is right and what is wrong. An educated populous is at the very basis of a democratic society. The more we know the more we can make wise decisions,” said Peggy O’Kane, NMCC assistant dean of learning resources and curator of the exhibit.

To engage and inform students about the Constitution and Constitution Day, a campus-wide scavenger hunt will also run through week’s end. Participating students will receive a list of questions and have to search out either the location or person on campus where they can find the answer. The Constitution Day scavenger hunt was developed by Jessica Miller, NMCC student activities coordinator.

The law establishing Constitution Day was enacted in 2004 with the passage of an amendment by Senator Robert Byrd (D-West Virginia) to the Omnibus spending bill of that year. Before this law was passed the holiday was known as Citizenship Day. The act mandates that all publicly funded educational institutions provide educational programming on the history of the American Constitution on that day or an adjacent weekday.



Opening the ceremony, NMCC student Michaela Black performed “The Star Spangled Banner” on her violin. Behind her are members of the Maine State Color Guard, from left: Don Pelkey of Fort Fairfield; John Bouchard of Fort Kent; Lester Dubois of Fort Kent; and Douglas Michaud of Caribou.