*“I think the public should understand that a judge's decision in the federal court system takes many factors into account. While judges take into account an individual's criminal history and other misdemeanors, they also look at past trauma and other issues that could cause the individual to perpetuate the cycle of criminal activity.”* Shivani Desai, 2024 Hometowns Student

The Indianapolis Hometowns students explored the First Amendment during their program about the Supreme Court case *Hess v. Indiana* (1973). The case arose following the arrest of Indiana University student Gregory Hess during a Vietnam War protest. After witnessing a live court proceeding and a question and answer session with Chief Judge Pratt, students engaged with Ken Falk (Director, ACLU Indiana) for an in-depth exploration of the First Amendment and its five freedoms. Building on that foundational knowledge, they learned about the Vietnam War from Professor Ray Haberski and toured the Indiana War Memorial with Brigadier General Stewart Goodwin. Vietnam veteran, General Bauerle, addressed students' questions about the war. Students examined how the war impacted the United States through protest music, historic televised news reports, and newspaper articles.

The rest of the week focused on Gregory Hess’ criminal case and appeals. Magistrate Judge Baker helped students understand both the state and federal court system, while Judge Sweeney provided information about key case precedents from *Brandenburg v. Ohio* and *Cohen v. California*. After mapping out how a case gets to the Supreme Court and what happens when a petition for the writ of certiorari reaches the Justices, the students reviewed key sections of the Supreme Court’s per curiam *Hess* opinion and Justice Rehnquist’s dissent.

Indy Hometowns students created an exhibit for the Birch Bayh Federal Courthouse’s Federal Court Learning Center. The four-panel display will be installed this fall and will be open to the public for viewing.

*“The first amendment protects the rights of free speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition. While there are no absolutes, this amendment as well as the 14th ensure that the federal or state government cannot infringe on your rights without compelling interest, and must be able to justify it within a court of law. The First Amendment is the backbone of all other freedoms.”* -Ashley Paul, 2024 Hometowns Student

The Society is grateful to Chief Judge Pratt for opening her courthouse to the Supreme Court and My Hometowns students for the week. This program would not have been possible without the partnership and tireless efforts of Mary Giorgio, the Public Outreach Coordinator for the U.S. District Court, Southern District of Indiana. We also extend our deep appreciation to the following legal and historical experts who shared their expertise with the Hometowns students: Zachary Myers (*United States Attorney*), Gwendolyn M. Beitz (*AFD*), Dwight Wharton (*Chief Probation Officer*), Matthew Gutwein (*DeLaney & DeLaney LLC*), and the Indiana Supreme Court for having us for oral arguments!