

News Advisory

From the Rhode Island Judiciary



Supreme Court rides circuit to Smithfield High School

March 29, 2016: The Rhode Island Supreme Court will again practice the centuries-old tradition of “riding the circuit” when it hears oral arguments at Smithfield High School on Wednesday, April 6.

“We are excited to take this special session of the Rhode Island Supreme Court to Smithfield High School,” said Chief Justice Paul A. Suttell, a former Smithfield resident. “This is an opportunity to take the work of the Supreme Court out of Providence so students and the public can see firsthand how their justice system works. We are looking forward to it.”

In the days before the automobile, courts would travel throughout their jurisdictions to hear arguments. This practice, called riding the circuit, was eventually dropped as transportation methods made it easier for litigants to travel. In the last 15 years, the Supreme Court has revived this practice as a way to open up the judicial process. The Supreme Court literally moves its entire operation to a local community and invites students and members of the public to observe the proceedings. The court last traveled in April 2015 to Rhode Island College.

Court will begin at 9:15 a.m. in the auditorium at Smithfield High School at 90 Pleasant View Avenue, Smithfield. The court session is open to the public. Those wishing to attend should arrive by 9 a.m. Parking is available nearby.

While at Smithfield High School, the justices will hear arguments in three cases: a Woonsocket lawsuit involving a man paralyzed in a swimming accident; an appeal of a criminal conviction for larceny, and a defendant’s appeal for post-conviction relief in an assault and battery upon a person over the age of 60.

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