

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**STUDENTS BUILD COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION**  
High School Students from Palacios and Wharton Join Together in Civic Education Experience

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**Houston, TX, June 10, 2016** – Five students from Palacios High School and six students from Wharton High School participated in a Student Legislative Seminar trip to Washington, DC, with the Institute for Civility in Government (ICG) on June 4-9. These Seminars teach students about how to be involved in the governing process while maintaining civility and respect, and usually involve a small group of students from one school. This was a historic first trip combining students from two different school districts.

In addition to learning about belief systems and how they affect us, the students applied critical thinking, listening and communication skills, and mutual collaboration to work together civilly, despite differences of opinion, and to come up with position statements representing the whole group on issues of which they had concerns. They met with their elected officials and staff and presented their views and their questions. Andi, a teacher chaperone from Palacios said, “Visiting Washington DC has been an awe-inspiring, eye-opening experience for our students. Not only have they been able to visit national buildings and monuments, they have also had the privilege of being involved in congressional processes.”

The trip also provided students an opportunity to enjoy much that Washington has to offer, including tours of monuments and museums, a free performance at the Kennedy Center, and visits to the National Cathedral, Arlington Cemetery, the Supreme Court, Library of Congress and the Capitol. “I am very grateful to have experienced this trip with all of these wonderful people that are now my friends,” said Samantha Guzman, a student from Wharton. “This experience has opened my eyes to the many things this great country has to offer and I have certainly seen a various number of monuments and attractions that I will never forget.”

The ICG launched on Capitol Hill on April 1, 1998, and the first group of high school students went to Washington, DC, in 2007. “Our Student Legislative Seminar trips to Washington, DC, have always provided a life-changing experience for students. We teach them how to be civil and how to participate in the governing process. It’s always a challenge to have the students come to agreement on tough issues, and we tell the students not to just go along to get along, but rather to seek common ground in an environment of mutual respect. This was especially true of this group of students since they were from different schools, and they’ve built community through collaboration and consideration,” said Cassandra Dahnke, ICG co-founder.

The Gulf Coast Medical Foundation, the Mary Louise Dobson Foundation, and the Trull Foundation provided funding for the Palacios/Wharton High School trip.

*“Civility is claiming and caring for one’s identity, needs and beliefs without degrading someone else’s in the process.”*  
— Tomas Spath and Cassandra Dahnke, Founders of the Institute for Civility in Government

**About the Institute for Civility in Government:** The Institute for Civility in Government is a grassroots, non-partisan, non-profit organization that is building civility in a society that all too often seems tilted toward uncivil speech and actions. Through its Student Legislative Seminars, students learn civility skills and then put those skills into practice in Washington, DC. The Institute believes that offering students a personal experience in the governing process, grounded in civility, sets an important precedent for their future involvement in the civic process. To learn more about the Institute for Civility in Government and how you can become a member, visit [www.instituteforcivility.org](http://www.instituteforcivility.org).

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