

# ATTORNEY VISIT: THE RULE OF LAW & THE AMERICAN DREAM

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This outline is meant to guide attorneys who are visiting high school classes to discuss the 2026 ABA Law Day Theme.

*The 2026 Law Day theme is “The Rule of Law and the American Dream.” The rule of law—the idea that no person is above the law—is what ensures the rights of the people to live their lives as freely as possible and to pursue their dreams. The ABA encourages all Americans to recognize Law Day on May 1, 2026, and to reflect on how the rule of law ensures all Americans have the ability to fulfill their dreams.*

Please note that this outline is just one approach to a classroom visit. Feel free to adapt for your own purposes. It’s suggested that you share this outline with the teacher whose classroom(s) you are visiting to see if there’s any changes s/he would like to make to this outline.

## I. INTRODUCTION (5–10 MINUTES)

GOAL: BUILD RAPPORT AND DEFINE KEY TERMS.

### Speaker Notes:

Introduce yourself, briefly share your background, and connect your legal work to everyday life. Ask: ‘What do you think it means to live in a country ruled by laws instead of by the rule of one individual?’

### Key Concepts:

- **The Rule of Law** means that no one is above the law and all are bound by it.
- **The American Dream** is the idea that everyone should have an equal opportunity to achieve success through hard work and determination.

### Discussion Prompt:

How do laws help ensure fairness and opportunity for everyone?

## II. FOUNDING PRINCIPLES IN THE CONSTITUTION (10 MINUTES)

GOAL: SHOW HOW THE RULE OF LAW IS EMBEDDED IN THE NATION’S FOUNDING FRAMEWORK.

### Speaker Notes:

Highlight the Constitution as the foundation of the Rule of Law. Discuss examples of how government power is limited by the law.

### Key Concepts:

- Preamble: ‘Establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility...’
- Articles I–III: Separation of Powers among the three branches.
- Article VI: Supremacy Clause — Constitution is the supreme law.
- 5th & 14th Amendments: Due Process Clauses.
- 14th Amendment: Equal Protection Clause.

**Discussion Prompt:**

Why is it important that no branch of government is above the law?

**III. THE BILL OF RIGHTS AND INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS (10 MINUTES)**

GOAL: CONNECT RIGHTS TO PERSONAL LIBERTY AND OPPORTUNITY.

**Speaker Notes:**

Explain that individual rights allow citizens to express themselves and pursue their goals freely.

**Key Concepts:**

- 1st Amendment: Freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly.
- 4th–8th Amendments: Fair treatment in criminal justice.
- 9th & 10th Amendments: Protection of unlisted rights and limits on government power.

**Discussion Prompt:**

Which right do you think is most important for achieving your personal dreams and why?

**IV. KEY SUPREME COURT CASES (15 MINUTES)**

GOAL: USE EXAMPLES THAT CONNECT THE RULE OF LAW TO REAL LIVES.

**Key Concepts:**

It may be useful to create a handout with information about these cases or have the teacher discuss them with the students ahead of time. Visit [oyez.org](http://oyez.org) for good summaries of each case.

- Marbury v. Madison (1803): Established judicial review — courts can strike down unconstitutional laws.
- Brown v. Board of Education (1954): Ended racial segregation in schools — equality under the law.
- Gideon v. Wainwright (1963): Guaranteed right to counsel — fairness regardless of wealth.
- Loving v. Virginia (1967): Struck down laws banning interracial marriage — equality and freedom.
- United States v. Nixon (1974): President must obey the law — no one is above it.
- Obergefell v. Hodges (2015): Marriage equality under the 14th Amendment — dignity and protection for all.

**Discussion Prompt:**

Which case do you think best represents the Rule of Law in action? Why?

## **V. CLASS ACTIVITY OR DISCUSSION (15 MINUTES)**

GOAL: ENGAGE STUDENTS ACTIVELY WITH MODERN OR HISTORICAL EXAMPLES.

### **Options:**

- Option A – Scenario Discussion: What if government officials could ignore the law when it's inconvenient?
- Option B – Case Connections: Divide students into groups to discuss one landmark case.
- Option C – Modern Connection: Ask, Where do you see the Rule of Law challenged or upheld today?

## **VI. CLOSING AND REFLECTION (5 MINUTES)**

GOAL: REINFORCE MAIN IDEAS AND INSPIRE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- 1) The Rule of Law ensures fairness.
- 2) The Constitution and courts protect rights.
- 3) These protections make the American Dream possible.

### **Final Reflection Question:**

In what ways do you see the Rule of Law applied in your community?