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In Pursuit of History

On a recent Sunday morning, I drove my wife Renu to a reception at the old Jefferson Hotel in Richmond for a meeting of the Richmond Metro Women’s Bar Association. Renu wanted to go because the guest of honor and speaker was Retired United States Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, the first female member of the high court, appointed by President Ronald Reagan in 1981. Renu reported afterward that Justice O’Connor focused her address on a topic that former NSSAR President General Bruce Wilcox touched upon at our VASSAR Semi-Annual Meeting in Virginia Beach last month: the need to promote and revitalize the teaching of American history in our public school systems.

Justice O’Connor provided some startling statistics: Only one in three Americans is able to name all three branches of the federal government while ninety (90%) percent can identify at least one judge on the “*American Idol*” television show. Fifty (50%) percent of all U.S. states do not include American history or civics as a regular component of curriculum in the public schools. She emphasized the need for each of us to do all that we can bring education on American history back into our schools. Personally and professionally, Justice O’Connor is more than doing her part through her involvement in various organizations, including delivery of addresses such as the one that she gave in Richmond. (She particularly recommended www.ourcourts.gov as an interactive website for students and teachers, especially middle school children.)

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