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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
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# news

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FILE COPY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EIU TO HOST PREMIER BOYS STATE

CHARLESTON, IL.--As many as 1,000 Illinois high school boys will converge on the Eastern Illinois University campus June 4-10 for The American Legion Premier Boys State.

Among the highlights of the 53th annual session of Premier Boys State are speeches by Governor James R. Thompson, Attorney General Neil Hartigan, Secretary of State Jim Edgar and Comptroller Roland Burriss.

Prior to their arrival at Eastern Saturday afternoon, the boys, called "citizens," will have been placed at random in mythical cities and counties and assigned to purely mythical "Federalist" and "Nationalist" parties.

The citizens participate in choosing their own city, county and state officials (from alderman to governor) in accordance with regular election procedures.

These officials are instructed in the duties of their offices--whether executive, legislative, or judicial--and, in citizenship practice periods, perform the functions of government.

The Constitution and the statues of the State of Illinois are the patterns from which the fundamental law of Premier Boys State has been developed, according to Tom Johnson of Rockford, president of the Boys State Board of Directors.

He said Premier Boys State may be regarded as a mythical 51st state, with the citizens performing the function of actual electors and office holders.

The citizenship program, Johnson said, is supplemented by required educational seminars held each morning on the various aspects of government operations, optional discussion groups at other times and formal evening assemblies for all citizens.

Additional activities through the week include the establishment of the Boys State Band, a state police and militia (established by the Boys State legislature).

Johnson said boys may also compete in an essay contest on the Bill of Rights or speech contest on the life of Abraham Lincoln.

Ample time has also been allowed for competitive recreational activities throughout the week, he added.

At the conclusion of the week, awards are given for various achievements and successful graduates become eligible to apply for college scholarship awards.

Finally, at the end of the week, the Boys State Board of Directors will select two delegates to Boys Nation in Washington, D.C. While there, they will practice citizenship on a national level and elect a President of Boys Nation.

Johnson, who said Premier Boys State has been held at Eastern for more than a decade, cited "staff support" as one of the primary reasons the group has continued to return to EIU. "The staffs at Eastern have been very accommodating and have gone out of their way to make us feel comfortable here. Eastern is also the right size school for us."

The selection of boys to Premier Boys State is made by local high school authorities, such as the dean of boys, the principal or assistant principal. The Boys State chairman of an American Legion Post which directly sponsors or obtains sponsors for boys also advises school authorities on eligible candidates.

Selection is based on a boy's qualifications, scholarship and whether he is representative of his school and community and would benefit from the training and impart some of what he learned at the session to his fellows during the ensuing school year.

To be eligible, candidates must also have completed at least one semester of 11th grade.