

## **April 23, 2012 –SCS Students Attend Walker Model Congress**

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### **SCS STUDENTS ATTEND WALKER MODEL CONGRESS**

Several students from Staunton City Schools attended the Walker Model Congress at Maggie L. Walker Governor's School in Richmond, April 12-13, 2013. Last year was the inaugural conference at the Maggie Walker Governor's School, and this year approximately 250 delegates were in attendance from a number of high and middle schools, including Robert E. Lee High School and Shelburne Middle School.

Model Congress is a well-known program nationwide that initiates debate and high level discussion similar to that which takes place in our nation's capital every day. It provides students with a valuable opportunity to learn more about the American government as well as develop skills in formulating opinions on issues of national importance, public speaking, teamwork, and compromise. The conference consists of a House of Representatives and Senate, in which students will break into assigned committees to discuss and explore, debate, and offer solutions to a variety of issues that face our nation today.

Three students from Robert E. Lee High School attended and each one left the conference with an award. Kyle VanHoy received verbal commendation for his work on the House International Relations committee, Moses Farley received honorable mention for his efforts on the House Science and Technology committee, and Emma Diduch received the second highest award - outstanding delegate, for her work on the Senate Health, Education, and Labor committee. Several eighth students from Shelburne also attended: Grace Adkins, Alex Erler, Grace Smith, and Damien Wade served on the House Committee; Megan Payne served on the Senate committee; Roger Carson and Bryce Colson served on a special committee dealing with the deficit; and Brice Wheeler served on the Cabinet.

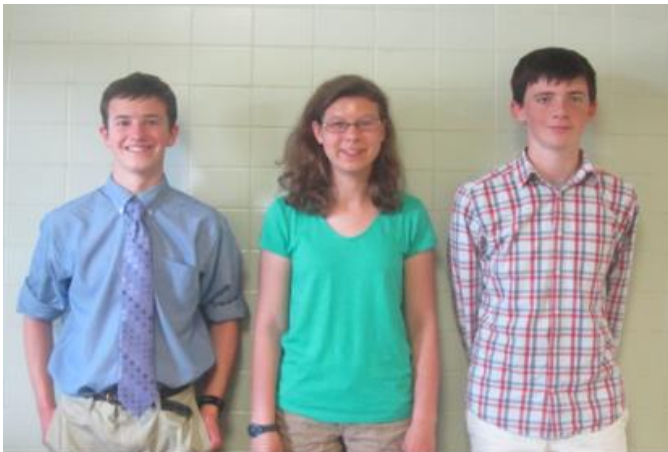
The students spent part of their time in a small committee, and the remainder in either a full House or full Senate session. The students tackled problems in a specific area of United States policy (such as foreign policy, education, or health) in small committees of 10-15 delegates, where they introduced, debated, and voted on bills. Delegates then moved to a full House or Senate session of 75-100 students, in which they debated and voted on the bills that passed from all of the committees; the bills that passed in a full session were then either signed or vetoed by the President of the conference. Rather than representing a specific person, the students represented the interests of the political party to which they were assigned.

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To help enhance the students' understanding of such weighty issues, prominent political figures were there to serve as guest speakers. Guest speakers in the past have included Virginia State Senator Donald McEachin, and House Majority Leader and Congressman, Eric Cantor. The speakers this year were Mackenzie Brunson, executive director of the Hampton Roads branch of StandUp for Kids, a charity that works to fight youth homelessness and the selected charity for this year's WMC, and Jennifer McClellan, delegate from the 71<sup>st</sup> District. In addition to the normal committee selections, a number of Special Committees were offered to provide interested students the opportunity to learn about policymaking beyond the legislative level. Students were able to argue the constitutionality of bills in the Supreme Court, propose solutions to reduce America's expanding budget deficit, or face a national emergency as the CIA.

Dr. Rowicki, principal of Robert E. Lee chaperoned the trip and had this to say about the experience afforded to all the students, "This is a great opportunity for our students to experience first-hand how the government works in the Commonwealth of Virginia."



Lee Students participating in the Walker Model Congress: (L to R) Moses Farley, Emma Diduch, and Kyle VanHoy.



Shelburne students participating in the Walker Model Congress: Front row (L to R) Bryce Colson, Grace Smith, Grace Adkins, and Damien Wade  
Back row (L to R) Roger Carson, Megan Payne, Alex Erler, and Brice Wheeler