

## The International Program – Haiti



A three-week educational “Project for Haiti” was arranged through World Learning, a visitor exchange program, under the auspices of the Department of State’s International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). The professional objectives for this project were, in part, to provide the Haitian judicial officials with “an understanding of the civil, criminal, military, and juvenile justice systems in the United States” and to “discuss the professional side of the judicial system with lawyers . . . and other legal professionals.”

A meeting was requested with a representative of Judicial Watch to discuss its mission and how it works to ensure that judges comply with the law. Judicial Watch attorney James Peterson met with the delegation in its offices on February 26, 2009.

As set forth in its [Mission Statement](#), “through its educational endeavors, Judicial Watch advocates high standards of ethics and morality in our nation’s public life and seeks to ensure that political and judicial officials do not abuse the powers entrusted to them by the American people. Judicial Watch fulfills its educational mission through litigation, investigations, and public outreach.” [The International Program](#) is an integral part of its educational program.

Attorney Jim Peterson welcomed the Haitian judicial officials and provided a general overview of Judicial Watch’s activities as a nonprofit, non-governmental organization that seeks to combat corruption in government, politics, and the law through the use of open records laws. Mr. Peterson emphasized the importance of adhering to the rule of law and discussed several recent lawsuits filed by Judicial Watch.

Mr. Peterson commented upon the [civil rights lawsuit](#) Judicial Watch filed just days prior to this meeting—one which drew immediate recognition by the Haitian judicial officials due to the intense media coverage surrounding the person of “Joe the Plumber” during the 2008 presidential campaign. He informed the delegation that

## **The International Program—Haiti**

the retaliation by high-ranking state government officials against Joe Wurzelbacher sent a clear message to other Americans who might ask a question of a candidate for public office. Mr. Peterson said citizens must feel free to ask questions of candidates for elected office without fear of reprisal.

The Haitian judicial officials expressed a keen interest in the work of Judicial Watch.