

## Local students sparkle in 70th Model Congress

**Then U.S. Rep. Gerald R. Ford, who became the 38th president, was a Model Congress keynote speaker.**

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SPRINGFIELD - The American International College Model Congress, which has attracted high school students since the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, concluded its 70th annual gathering Saturday at AIC.

More than 300 students from 18 high schools in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York were involved in crafting, debating and voting on a host of bills. Members of the AIC faculty and administrators judged the students on oratorical skills and knowledge of parliamentary procedure, and Minnechaug Regional High School in Wilbraham had the top three winners.

Artur Wysoczanski, who finished in first place, was offered a scholarship to AIC that is worth \$25,500 a year for four years. Anthony T. Gabrielle finished second and was offered a half scholarship

and Robert J. Skalbite came in third and was offered a one-quarter scholarship. The fourth place finisher, Mitch Despain, of Hoosac Valley High School in Cheshire, was also offered a one-quarter scholarship.

"My first reaction, I would say, it was complete astonishment," said Wysoczanski, a 15-year-old junior and House delegate who was participating in his third Model Congress.

Wysoczanski also attributed Minnechaug's impressive finish to its entire contingent, including adviser William Metzger, a history teacher at the school.

"We couldn't have made it without each other. We couldn't have made it without him," he said.

The team of Caitlyn M. Normand, Danielle T. Lessard, Chelsea D. Orefice and Brandon G. Santiago of Sabis International Charter School in Springfield won the Outstanding Delegation Award. Normand, a junior who was a Senate delegate, said there was no downside to the Model Congress.

"Hands down, it's all positive," she said.

"It's like training camp for politicians," Lessard said.

Bills proposed this year

ranged from pulling the United States out of the United Nations to creating a publicly funded and operated preschool system to addressing the shortage of primary care physicians.

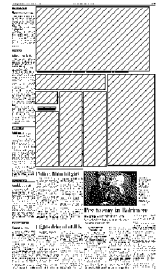
The Model Congress began Thursday night and concluded with a banquet Saturday. The Congress is the longest running event of its kind in the country, and over the years it keynote speakers have included then U.S. Rep. Gerald R. Ford, who became the 38th president; current Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., then a U.S. senator representing Delaware; and U.S. Sen. John F. Kerry, of Massachusetts.

U.S. Rep. Richard E. Neal, of Springfield, gave the keynote address this year.

One of this year's judges was Claire M. Nolin, an AIC graduate who was chairwoman of the 1978 Model Congress. She was a delegate in 1974 while a student at South Hadley High School.

"It's very impressive," said Nolin, adding there were some "very good debaters and speakers and thoughtful bills."

"I just think it's a real credit to AIC that they've done this for 70 years," said Nolin, an administrator with the state of Connecticut's Office of Policy and Management.





**Artur Wyszczanski, 15, of Minnechaug Regional High School, speaks in the House of Representatives session of the 70th annual Model Congress held Saturday at American International College in Springfield. The students opposite him are Eleanor R. Vigneault, 16, left, Adam M. Chivers, 15, and Anthony T. Gabrielle, 17, also from Minnechaug.**

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**MICHAEL S. GORDON**



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**Tianna M. Procon, 16, of Chicopee High School, studies her notes during the Senate session of the Model Congress which ended Saturday.**