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New Hampshire Secretary of State David M. Scanlan Announces Winners of the 2023 NASS John Lewis Youth Leadership Award

State Representatives Jonah Wheeler and Valerie McDonnell are this year's recipients.

CONCORD, NH (January 30, 2024): New Hampshire Secretary of State David M. Scanlan is pleased to announce that State Representatives Jonah Wheeler (D) of Peterborough and Valerie McDonnell (R) of Salem are New Hampshire's 2023 recipients of the [John Lewis Youth Leadership Award](#). Established by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) in 2021 to honor Congressman John Lewis, this award recognizes young leaders with a passion for social justice and civic education, and a desire to improve the quality of life in their local communities.



Representative Jonah Wheeler

A year before he was elected to the New Hampshire House of Representatives, Representative Wheeler presented his speech, "Moral Obligations", in front of students at Franklin Pierce University. He discussed how students could make their voices heard throughout their community and channel their knowledge into morally effective action. Representative Wheeler serves his constituents as the second-youngest member of the NH House and as one of the youngest legislators in the country.

Representative Wheeler's legislative initiatives include expanding healthcare access, improving access to housing, putting in place consumer protections, and

implementing comprehensive mental healthcare in our schools.

Representative Valerie McDonnell was elected to office at just 18 years old and was the

youngest state legislator in the entire country when she was elected. An advocate for civic literacy, she believes civics education prepares students to become active citizens and informed young adults are more likely to register to vote, petition for legislation, and even run for office.



Representative Valerie McDonnell

To further increase civic literacy, Representative McDonnell created educational resources that explain the Constitution in easy-to-understand language including a series of YouTube videos outlining the Articles of the Constitution.

Secretary Scanlan will present the awards in the Secretary of State's Office on Thursday, February 1, at 8:45 a.m.

David Scanlan, New Hampshire Secretary of State: "I am pleased to present this award to Representatives Wheeler and McDonnell, who as young state legislators serve as roles models and inspiration to our newest generation of voters through civic engagement consistent with the ideals of Congressman John Lewis."