

Tony Pirotta
Sumner High School, Hillsborough County
2025 Honorable Mention

Tony teaches government and economics at Sumner High School in Hillsborough County.

He was chosen as a 2025 Honorable Mention for incorporating the Tampa Bay Times into his extracurricular program, "Ought to be a Law." This program allows students to collaborate with local state lawmakers to propose new laws.

Each year, students use the Tampa Bay Times, tampabay.com and other sources to research issues that people in our state are facing that could have a legislative solution.

They then apply critical thinking to devise solutions and advocate for government action to improve community life.

"Ought to be a Law" allows students to begin developing solutions to real world problems while developing a myriad of skill sets that transfer to the real-world working environment. Students learn how to:

- Collaborate while working on a project;
- Communicate within their groups and with stakeholders;
- Build coalitions;
- Advocate for a cause;
- Speak in public;
- Anticipate opposition questions and strategies; and
- Negotiate.

Tony writes, "The Tampa Bay Times has been a valuable tool for these students to learn about the issues our community faces as I try to help them understand that as citizens of this community, they are never too young to stand up and suggest solutions. This program has been using the Tampa Bay Times for 16 years to inform students and show them how to become active citizens in our community."

Over the past 16 years, “Ought to be a Law” has seen 10 student-proposed bills become law, including two in 2025.

