Cabrillo College delves into nation’s founding document

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APTOS — One by one, audience members placed their hands over their hearts, captivated by the Cabrillo College students performing the national anthem during the fifth annual Constitution Day.

The campus got an early start by holding its talk on the nation’s founding document at the historic Sesnon House on Thursday. Federally funded schools across the country are expected to teach about the Constitution today — the date it was signed in 1787.

Constitution Day began after former Sen. Robert Byrd of West Virginia added a clause to the 2005 federal spending bill requiring schools to dedicate a day to discussing the Constitution.

Cabrillo College political science instructor Rory O’Brien has helped organize the celebration since.

“The political science department has a great interest in events like this,” O’Brien said. “We try to explore, as we have in the past, explored, parts of the Constitution, particularly amendments, but this year we are having a more general discussion about the relevance of the Constitution in our lives today.”

This year, O’Brien was joined by history program chair Michael Mangin and Cabrillo President Brian King in leading a group of students and faculty in discussion about the philosophical and legal foundations of the Constitution.

Group members were interested in how the Constitution could limit the influence of special interests in elections, public expectations of elected officials and improving foreign policy.

“I came during the election year when they spoke about the Electoral College, which I didn’t know much about. It was fabulous hearing people talk so intelligently about our government,” said Santa Cruz resident Denise Valencia. “It’s the most important piece of paper in D.C. It’s a good thing to honor it.”