



ESSAY RULES

Who May Enter: The contest is open to high school students in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, the United States Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Students in the 9th through 12th grades attending public, private, parochial and charter schools, and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status, are invited to participate. Children of federal judges, chambers staff, and employees of federal court offices are not eligible to participate.

Contest Theme: “The First Amendment and the Schoolhouse Gate: Students’ Free Speech Rights”

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution provides that “Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or the press”

But how does this constitutional right apply to students?

More than 50 years ago, the United States Supreme Court said that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech and expression at the schoolhouse gate” – but it also has said that students’ rights are not the same as “rights of adults in other settings.” Decades later, the internet and social media allow students to express themselves in many different ways in addition to banners and symbolic clothing, with greater reach and impact than in the past.

The 2022 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest asks students to address: **“What are students’ free speech rights – and responsibilities – on and off campus?”**

Participants are asked to consider what rights the First Amendment provides to students engaging in free speech – both inside and outside of school. Participants also should consider the responsibilities, if any, that students, schools, or the government have with respect to speech by students, including whether it may cause harm to others.

Length and Format: Essays should be between 500 to 1,000 words. Proper use of footnotes and bibliographies will be credited during judging. Footnotes and bibliographies will not be included in the word count. Essays must be submitted electronically on this website – <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest> – as a Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF file. When entering the contest, you will be provided instructions on how to upload the file. A student may submit both an essay and a video, but only one of each.

Contest Duration: Entries will be accepted beginning January 17, 2022. **The deadline for entries is 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on March 18, 2022.** Finalists will be selected in May and the winners announced in June.

Judging: Judging will be based on the following criteria:

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| 1) | Understanding of constitutional principles
<u>Demonstrates clear understanding of:</u> (a) the history and development of student free speech rights and responsibilities under the First Amendment; and (b) the role of students, schools and the courts in considering and applying these rights and responsibilities | 40 points |
| 2) | Clarity and effectiveness in expressing the theme
Essay organizes and communicates concepts and ideas clearly | 30 points |
| 3) | Grammar, spelling and composition
Essay uses correct spelling, proper grammar and proper sentence composition | 25 points |
| 4) | Use of footnotes, bibliographies
Essay properly identifies and attributes information taken from other sources | 5 points |

Release Forms: Should you become a finalist in the contest, you will be required to submit a release form allowing the Ninth Circuit to publish your essay in print publications and on public court websites. In addition, contest winners will be required to provide and authorize use of photographs or videos of themselves in contest-related promotional materials.

Disqualification: Providing false information, not adhering to the rules, not meeting the submission deadline or not providing a release form if requested may result in disqualification.

Questions: Contact the Office of the Circuit Executive, (415) 355-8873 / civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov.