

# THE AMERICAN LEGION High School Oratorical Scholarship Program

*“A Constitutional Speech Contest”*



## *Official Rules*

> 2016–2017

### **General information**

The purpose of The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program “A Constitutional Speech Contest” is to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States among high school students. Other objectives of the contest include the development of leadership qualities, the ability to think and speak clearly and intelligently, and the preparation for acceptance of the duties and responsibilities, rights, and privileges of American citizenship.

### **Scholarships**

Scholarship awards are presented to the three finalists in the final round of the national contest as follows: **1st place: \$18,000; 2nd place: \$16,000; 3rd place: \$14,000.** Each department (state) winner who is certified into and participates in the first round of the national contest will receive a **\$1,500 scholarship.** Each first round winner who advances to and participates in the second round, but does not advance to the final round, will receive an additional **\$1,500** scholarship to pursue education beyond high school.

The national organization of The American Legion will award scholarships to the three finalists, department winners, and first round winners who are eliminated during the second round of competition. These scholarships may be used to attend any college or university in the United States.

A contestant must give both his or her prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse to receive the scholarship.

In addition to the scholarships awarded by the national organization, there are several hundred scholarships awarded at the discretion of intermediate organizations, to participants at post, district or county, and department levels of competition.

### **Department contests**

Arrangements for contests leading to the department finals shall be the responsibility of each department (state) organization of The American Legion. For those levels of competition prior to the department finals, the rules and regulations set forth in this brochure are not mandatory — they are offered as a guideline. However, all department finals contests shall conform with national contest procedures, rules and regulations, if the department wishes its finalist to compete in the national finals.

A winner certified to the National Americanism Division of The American Legion by a department which did not conduct its final competition in conformity with the rules and regulations as set forth herein may, in the judgment of the director of the Americanism Division or the director’s representative, be disqualified from competition in the national contest.

Each department may certify one contestant into the national contest. If for any reason the department winner is unable to compete in the national contest, the department first runner-up may be substituted following approval by The American Legion’s National Americanism Commission. A department first runner-up accepted into national competition will be entitled to all national awards, entitlements and compensation that the department winner would have received had he/she participated at that level.

Department contest winners must be certified to the National Americanism Division, **NO LATER THAN MARCH 18, 2017.**

Failure to meet this deadline could result in disqualification of the contestant.

For information about the Oratorical Contest in your state, contact your American Legion post or state headquarters.

## Eligibility

Eligible participants in the contest shall be citizens of or lawful permanent residents of the United States.

All contestants must be bona fide students herein described as any student under the age of 20 years on the date of the national contest who is presently enrolled in a high school or junior high school (public, parochial, military, private or home school), commencing with grade nine and terminating with grade 12. Students must be enrolled in high school or junior high school during the time of participation at any level of the contest.

High school students that graduate early during the school year are eligible to compete if they are not enrolled in a college, university, trade school or other institution of higher learning at the time of the department finals contest.

Contestants must either be legally domiciled within or attend an educational institution within the department (state) where they enter competition. Contestants can enter competition in only one department.

The three finalists of the national contest will be ineligible for further participation at any level.

## Prepared oration

The prepared oration must be on some aspect of the Constitution of the United States with emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The same subject and oration used in the department contest must be used in the national contest.

**The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant and must not take up less than eight minutes or more than 10 minutes for delivery.**

Contestants may have in their possession a copy of their prepared oration in the first holding room. The copy may be in electronic or paper form. They may consult the copy of their prepared oration, until they exit the holding room in order to begin the contest, at which time the copy of the prepared oration will be surrendered to the contest official who is monitoring the first holding room.

## Assigned topic

The assigned topic discourse must not consume less than three minutes or more than five minutes for delivery. The purpose of the assigned topic discourse is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of his or her research, and the ability to discuss the topic as related to the basic principles of government under the Constitution.

The assigned topic shall be drawn by the contest official in full view of the audience immediately before the last

speaker begins delivery of his/her prepared oration and will be made known to the audience and each contestant approximately five minutes prior to the time of delivery. The topic will be on some phase of the Constitution of the United States, as listed under assigned topics for the current year's contest in this brochure.

## No foreign languages or songs

**All contestants at each contest level are required to speak in the English language on the same assigned topic.**

It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases of a foreign language into the prepared oration and/or assigned topic in order to develop the argument, establish a point, etc. The vast majority of the prepared oration and/or assigned topic must be delivered in the English language.

**Also, the singing of a song in any language is not permitted and will result in the immediate disqualification of the contestant. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song provided proper attribution is made.**

In the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse, quotations must be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than 10 words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally.

## Assigned topics for 2017

**Amendment 7:** In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

**Amendment 10:** The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

**Amendment 16:** The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration.

**Amendment 17:** The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote. The electors in each State shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State legislatures.

When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies; Provided, that the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election as the legislature may direct.

This amendment shall not be so construed as to affect the election or term of any Senator chosen before it becomes valid as part of the Constitution.



*The top three contestants in the 2015 High School Oratorical Scholarship Program display their awards.*

**First Place:**  
**Benjamin Crosby - WA**  
*(right)*

**Second Place:**  
**Solomon Brown - MS** *(left)*

**Third Place:**  
**Cheyenne Mathews - AK**  
*(center)*

*Photo — Clay Lomneth*

## **Contest regulations**

A drawing shall be held by the official in charge of the contest to determine the order in which the contestants will appear. The contest chairman shall announce the title of the contestant's prepared oration immediately after introducing him/her as contestant No. 1, contestant No. 2, etc. The chairman will request the audience to refrain from applause until the judges have made their decision.

A raised platform is not compulsory; however, it is strongly recommended. **The use of notes, amplification, lectern or speaker's stand by contestants or prompting in any manner is not permitted. Props are not permitted.**

The use of any type of electronic/digital data gathering, receiving and/or transmitting equipment in any form by contestants or members of the audience is prohibited.

The time allotted for each contestant to deliver their prepared oration shall not be less than eight or more than 10 minutes, and for the assigned topic, not less than three or more than five minutes.

An official timer shall be named by the contest chairman whose duty it shall be to keep an accurate time record of each contestant, and he shall be located on the main floor in full view of the contestants. The timekeeper shall begin timing each contestant at the start of the prepared oration. The timer should be equipped with a stopwatch and time cards for the prepared oration carrying the figures 8, 9 and 10. When eight minutes have been used, the time warning card with the figure 8 thereon shall be placed in full view of the speaker, following with 9 and 10 as the speaker progresses. The same procedure shall be used with cards bearing 3, 4 and 5 during the assigned topic discourse. The contest chairman shall

announce the time consumed by each contestant for the prepared oration and the assigned topic immediately after each contestant speaks for the benefit of the judges.

Contestants are required to remain in a private room, where the discourse of the other speakers cannot be heard, until it is their turn to speak (contestants will be under the supervision of an individual appointed by the contest chairman). As the contestants conclude their prepared orations, they must return to a soundproof holding room. As each speaker concludes his or her assigned topic discourse, they shall not be allowed to associate with contestants who have not fulfilled the assigned topic requirement.

Approximately five minutes prior to the time of the delivery of the assigned topic discourse, contestant No. 1 will be informed of the topic drawn for the assigned topic and shall be permitted to retire to privacy under the direction of an individual appointed by the contest chairman, whose duty it shall be to see that no contestant is permitted to consult any text matter or notes having any connection with the subject matter upon which he/she is to speak, other than the actual words of the topic provided on the card drawn.

Each succeeding contestant will be called upon in the order in which he/she previously appeared. He/she shall also, in turn, be informed of the topic of the assigned topic discourse and shall then be escorted to privacy in the manner as provided for contestant No. 1.

Uniforms are not permitted. Appropriate business attire is to be worn by all contestants. Contestants are not permitted to wear awards and medals from previous competitions.

## Travel expenses

The national organization of The American Legion will pay the travel and lodging expenses of department winners and their chaperones to the national contest. **All contestants must be accompanied by a chaperone over 21 years of age.**

The national organization of The American Legion will not assume liability for personal injury, property damage or loss sustained by any contestant or chaperone en route to or from the contest; however, The American Legion does carry a nominal group accident insurance policy on contestants certified into the national competition. Contestants will travel by an air carrier selected by the national organization of The American Legion or personal automobile if previously approved by the national organization of The American Legion.

## TV and radio

Live television and radio broadcasts are permitted in all contests as well as taping or other types of media for later showing, provided: 1) the lighting and other site conditions are the same for all contestants; 2) the taping or broadcasts shall in no way distract the contestants or interfere with the announced scheduled time of the contest; 3) the normal speaking voice of the contestant is not interfered with or amplified within the auditorium; and 4) The American Legion is in no way financially obligated without its prior approval.

## Judges

The judges are an integral part of the Oratorical Contest. Their qualifications are considered carefully as the decision of the judges is final and must be reached without bias. Impartial judging in all contests is the key to fairness and success of the program which results in the selection of a national champion.

All department finals and the national contest must use five judges. No publicity shall be given to the names of the judges in advance of the contest. During the contest, the judges will be seated in different locations in the auditorium and each judge shall render his or her final decision without consultation with other judges or any other person.

Judges will be advised that a lack of emphasis in the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government must result in their downgrading the contestant. Judges are permitted to

downgrade a contestant up to a maximum of 10 points for failure to speak about the Constitution. The contest chairman will announce any violation of time for each contestant. A penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof, shall be assessed against the contestant's total score.

The judges, timekeepers, tabulators and the contest chairman, following the last assigned topic discourse, may proceed to a private room for final review and tabulation. **The decision of the judges is final.**

## Tabulators

The contest chairman will appoint no less than three tabulators for the department finals contest. It will be their responsibility to review the judges' scorecards to be certain they are fully tabulated and signed before they are submitted for final tabulation.

Judges' scorecards for department finals and the national contest will not be divulged to anyone at the site of the contest. The judges' scorecards become the property of The American Legion National Headquarters.

## National finals contest

- The national finals contest will be held at the Wyndham Indianapolis West April 21-23, 2017, in Indianapolis. Quarter-final and semi-final contests are scheduled to be held on Saturday, April 22. The championship is scheduled for Sunday, April 23.
- All contestants and chaperones will arrive on the Friday of the contest weekend. All contestants will be lodged at a hotel to be determined in Indianapolis.
- A mandatory pre-contest orientation session for all contestants will be held the Friday evening of the contest weekend.
- A banquet honoring all contestants will be held the Sunday afternoon of the contest weekend.
- All contestants and chaperones will depart for home late Sunday afternoon.

## For more information

Individuals interested in learning more about the contest should contact:

- For dates, sites and deadline information concerning **local, district and state level competition**, individuals should **contact their nearby American Legion post** or their **state headquarters office of The American Legion**.
- For information concerning the **national contest**, contact: Americanism Division, The American Legion, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1055; telephone (317) 630-1204; or email [oratorical@legion.org](mailto:oratorical@legion.org).





**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
 HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM - "A CONSTITUTIONAL SPEECH CONTEST"  
 JUDGE'S SCORECARD



NAME OF JUDGE: \_\_\_\_\_

		Contestants					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>A. CONTENT</b>							
1. Originality, freshness, directness, application of knowledge on topic.	Prepared Oration	12 points					
	Assigned Topic	4 points					
2. Skill in selecting examples, description, analogies, specific data.	Prepared Oration	12 points					
	Assigned Topic	4 points					
3. Logic (correctness of inference)	Prepared Oration	12 points					
	Assigned Topic	4 points					
4. Comprehensiveness of knowledge, knows the subject matter.	Prepared Oration	16 points					
	Assigned Topic	6 points					
<b>B. SPEAKING SKILLS</b>							
1. Voice and Diction	Prepared Oration	6 points					
	Assigned Topic	4 points					
2. Style: language use, word arrangement, transition, word selection.	Prepared Oration	6 points					
	Assigned Topic	4 points					
3. Body actions, poise, eye contact, posture, gestures	Prepared Oration	6 points					
	Assigned Topic	4 points					
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>							
<b>PENALTIES: 1 point for each minute or fraction thereof over or under allotted time</b>		Prepared Oration					
		Assigned Topic					
1-10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution							
<b>Final Total Points</b>							
Position Number - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (Highest Points = 1st place, second highest points = 2nd place, etc.)							

Score all contestants - NO TIES PERMITTED

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

American Legion department (state) contact information is online:

 **[www.legion.org/departments](http://www.legion.org/departments)**

More information is available online:

 **[www.legion.org/oratorical](http://www.legion.org/oratorical)**



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