

VFW



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

EDWARD J. KEARNS POST and AUXILIARY NO 6024

MISSION VIEJO, CA

Some Criteria and Tips for your Voice of Democracy audio Essay

Most importantly, your essay must be your original work. It is very tempting, but **Do Not Use AI**. If you plagiarize or use AI software when writing the essay our AI checker will find it and your entry will be disqualified and you will be banned from future participation.

These are frequent problems that you can avoid --

- Be sure the application is fully completed in INK, if not typed, and **legible**, signed, and attached or emailed with your essay.
- **Do not write or type your name anywhere on the essay** (OK to put your name on the pdf and audio files when emailing).
- **Do not say your name** at any time during the audio recording (OK to put your name on the audio file or flash drive).
- Make sure the title of your essay, both written and spoken, is **exactly** the theme: "**What A Veteran Taught Me About America**" This theme should also be the **first thing spoken** on your recording.
- Do not use **names** of family members or references to ethnicity that could identify you.
- Creativity and Original Thought helps make your essay stand out from the rest
- Stay on topic and come to a conclusion that reiterates the theme

The audio recording is very important; **a poor spoken presentation can ruin the best written essay.**

- Speak slowly and clearly with emphasis in your voice to make your points.
- Use the 3-5 minute time effectively. Not too short or too long. It is *much* better to shorten your essay than to rush while speaking to make the time deadline.

All entries must be emailed or delivered to the Essay Committee / VFW Post 6024 no later than **October 23, 2026** to be eligible for awards at the District, State, and National levels.

Please plan to submit your essay several days before the deadline, do not wait until the last minute. That way we can check them for presentation problems and get corrections made if necessary before the judging begins.