

# THE AMERICAN LEGION High School Oratorical Scholarship Program

*“A Constitutional Speech Contest”*



## *Official Rules*

> 2020

### **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 she/he participated at that level.

Department contest winners must be certified to the National Americanism Division, **NO LATER THAN MARCH 16, 2020.**

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 state accredited home school) in which the curriculum of said high school is considered to be of high school level, 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 American Legion National High School Oratorical 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 be either 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 subject to be used for the prepared oration in the Oratorical Contest must be on some aspect of the Constitution of the United States with emphasis to the attendant 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 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 that time the copy of the prepared oration will be surrendered to the contest official who is monitoring the first holding room.

In the prepared oration, as well as in 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 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 selected from Articles and Sections. Below are the assigned topics for 2020.

## Assigned topics for 2020

**Amendment XII:** The electors shall meet in their respective states, and vote by ballot for president and vice president, one of whom, at least, shall not be an inhabitant of the same state with themselves; they shall name in their ballots the person voted for as president, and in distinct ballots the person voted for as vice president, and they shall make distinct lists of all persons voted for as president, and of all persons voted for as vice president, and of the number of votes for each, which lists they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the seat of the government of the United States, directed to the president of the Senate. The president of the Senate shall, in the presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the certificates and the votes shall then be counted. The person having the greatest number of votes for president, shall be the president, if such number be a majority of the whole number of electors appointed; and if no person have such majority, then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as president, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the president. But in choosing the president, the votes shall be taken by states, the representation from each state having one vote; a quorum for this purpose shall consist of a member or members from two-thirds of the states, and a majority of all the states shall be necessary to a choice. And if the House of Representatives shall not choose a president whenever the right of choice shall devolve upon them, before the fourth day of March next following, then the vice president shall act as president, as in the case of the death or other constitutional disability of the president. The person having the greatest number of votes as vice president, shall be the vice president, if such number be a majority of the whole number of electors appointed, and if no person have a majority, then from the two highest numbers on the list, the Senate shall choose the vice president; a quorum for the purpose shall consist of two-thirds of the whole number of senators, and a majority of the whole number shall be necessary to a choice. But no person constitutionally ineligible to the office of president shall be eligible to that of vice president of the United States.



**2019 American Legion National Oratorical Contest winners, 1st place, Patrick Junker of Waukee, Iowa (center); 2nd place, Caleb Maue of Homer Glen, Ill. (right); and 3rd place, Eden Carnes of Friendsville, Tenn. (left).**

Photo — Trevor Ruszkowski

**Amendment XX:** Section 1. The terms of the president and vice president shall end at noon on the 20th day of January, and the terms of senators and representatives at noon on the third day of January, of the years in which such terms would have ended if this article had not been ratified; and the terms of their successors shall then begin.

Section 2. The Congress shall assemble at least once in every year, and such meeting shall begin at noon on the third day of January, unless they shall by law appoint a different day.

Section 3. If, at the time fixed for the beginning of the term of the president, the president elect shall have died, the vice president elect shall become president. If a president shall not have been chosen before the time fixed for the beginning of his term, or if the president elect shall have failed to qualify, then the vice president elect shall act as president until a president shall have qualified; and the Congress may by law provide for the case wherein neither a president elect nor a vice president elect shall have qualified, declaring who shall then act as president, or the manner in which one who is to act shall be selected, and such person shall act accordingly until a president or vice president shall have qualified.

Section 4. The Congress may by law provide for the case of the death of any of the persons from whom the House of Representatives may choose a president whenever the right of choice shall have devolved upon them, and for the case of the death of any of the persons from whom the Senate may choose a vice president whenever the right of choice shall have devolved upon them.

Section 5. Sections 1 and 2 shall take effect on the 15th day of October following the ratification of this article.

Section 6. This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of three-fourths of the several states within seven years from the date of its submission.

**Amendment XXIV.** Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other election for president or vice president, for electors for president or vice president, or for senator or representative in Congress, shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.

**Amendment XXVII.** No law, varying the compensation for the services of the senators and representatives, shall take effect, until an election of representatives shall have intervened.

## ***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.**

## What to wear

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

## 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 she/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 she/he previously appeared. She/he 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.

## 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 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.** All national contest 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 hotel April 17-19, 2020,

in Indianapolis. Quarterfinal and semifinal rounds are scheduled to be held on Saturday, April 18. The championship is scheduled for Sunday, April 19.

- All contestants and chaperones will arrive on Friday, April 17. 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 evening of Friday, April 17.
- A banquet honoring all contestants will be held the afternoon of Sunday, April 19.
- All contestants and chaperones will depart for home after the banquet on Sunday.

### **Travel expenses**

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

The national organization of The American Legion shall 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 filming or other types of media for later showing, provided: 1) the lighting and other site conditions are the same for all contestants; 2) the filming 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 for anything without its prior approval.

## **For more information**

Individuals interested in learning more about The American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest should contact:

- For dates, sites and deadline information concerning **local, district and state level competition, contact your local American Legion post** or their **state headquarters office of The American Legion.**
- For information concerning the **national contest**, 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"  
 JUDGES' SCORECARD



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

<b>A. CONTENT</b>		<b>Contestants</b>					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Was the speech original, fresh, and direct, applying the student's knowledge?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	12 points 4 points					
2. Did the student skillfully select examples, descriptions, analogies, and specific data?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	12 points 4 points					
3. Was the speech logical, well organized, and developed?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	12 points 4 points					
4. Did the student show a comprehensiveness of knowledge of the subject matter?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	16 points 6 points					
<b>B. SPEAKING SKILLS</b>							
1. Did the student use volume, rate, pitch, and diction effectively?	Prepared Oration	6 points					
	Assigned Topic	4 points					
2. Rate the speaker's style: language use, word arrangement and selection, and transitions.	Prepared Oration	6 points					
	Assigned Topic	4 points					
3. Were body actions -- poise, eye contact, posture, gestures, facial expressions -- appropriate?	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					
<b>1-10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution</b>							
<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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