

2024 Oratory Contest Rules and Information

Contest Rules

1. Eligibility: To compete in the state and local contests, contestants must be in grades 9-12 as of February 1, 2023. To compete in the national contest, students must be a junior or senior. If the state's first place winner is in grade 9 or 10, he/she will win the first place prize, and the highest scoring student in grade 11 or 12 will advance to the national contest. In case of non-traditional students or home-school students, the school must recognize the student as in the equivalent grade or the year the student will enter college will be used to determine eligibility.
2. Students can only compete in one local affiliate contest in a contest year.
3. Contestants are to research, write and present an original prolife speech on the issue of abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, or embryonic stem cell research (including human cloning if desired). The speech must address one of these topics directly, using other topics only as support. Copyrighted speeches are not allowed. Contestants must use entirely new speeches if they compete in multiple years. Speeches must be typed in full and submitted with the contestant's application.
4. Because the speech is to be an oration, appropriate gestures are allowed. The style and speech type should be appropriate to the message, but the speech must not be a dramatic presentation (e.g. portrayal of a baby in the womb, short story, poem). Quotes are fine but should not dominate the speech and must be appropriately attributed. Props are not permitted.
5. The speech should appeal to a broad audience, including those who may not be prolife.
6. Speeches are to be 5 to 7 minutes in length. Penalizing speeches outside the 5 to 7 minute range is left to judges' discretion. Speeches under 4 or over 8 minutes will be disqualified.
7. When using facts and statistics, contestants should use current information available from reputable sources. Contestants may be penalized by judges for using inaccurate information.
8. Judges score speakers on a 10-point scale in each of these five criteria: thesis/structure, content, understanding/coverage of prolife topics, presentation and the judges' overall opinion.
9. Speech content may not be significantly changed as a contestant advances, though fine-tuning for minor corrections, timing, etc. is allowed and encouraged. A copy of the winner's speech is forwarded to the state and national levels to ensure that no major changes have been made.
10. Memorization is not required and it is acceptable for contestants to use notes or refer to their written speeches if necessary. Though not required at the national level, most speeches are memorized.
11. Contestants will have the option to use a podium and a microphone at the state contest if available. Microphones are generally not allowed at the national contest.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When are the local and state contests?

- A: 1. Affiliates set their local date. Affiliates should submit the local contest sponsorship form by Friday, January 26. Local contests are usually held in late February or March. All local contests should be finished before the Friday, April 19th due date for submitting local results but it is advised they are finished by April 13th to give you time before the due date.
2. The state contest will be on Saturday, May 25, 2024, at St. Thomas Aquinas church in East Lansing.

Q: When and where is the national contest?

- A: The national contest will be held on Saturday, June 29, 2024, in Crystal City, Virginia.

Q: What are the prizes?

- A: 1. Local prizes are left to the discretion of affiliates, though suggested prizes are \$100, \$50 and \$25 for the top three winners. In addition to cash prizes, groups might offer framed certificates, roses, precious feet pins, t-shirts, tickets to affiliate events and other items to all contestants.
2. State prizes include a small gift for all participants, monetary awards of \$500, \$300 and \$200 and prolife gear for the top three winners, and an expenses-paid trip to the national contest for our national contest entrant and a parent/guardian.
3. National prizes are \$1,000, \$750, \$500 and \$250 for the top four winners. In addition, the first-place winner will receive tickets to the National Right to Life Convention banquet the night of the contest and will be asked to give his/her speech at the banquet.

Q: Where can students obtain resource materials for their chosen topics?

- A: Newspapers, libraries and the Internet are great sources of information. Right to Life of Michigan's website RTL.org is an excellent resource. Right to Life of Michigan Educational Resource Centers also have resources available. Ambitious students might also contact staff at local crisis pregnancy centers or hospices for an inside perspective on life issues. Contestants should avoid using research that would not be acceptable in a paper assigned for a class (e.g. Wikipedia).

Q: What if our local contest winner can't attend the state contest?

- A: The runner-up in the local contest may compete in the state contest should the winner be unable to attend. The deadline for local contest coordinators to notify the state oratory coordinator of the runner-up's substitution and to submit the runner-up's speech is Wednesday, April 26.

Q: Can last year's contest winner participate in next year's contest?

- A: Local and state contest winners are not excluded from participating. Students winning first place in the national contest as juniors are not allowed to compete again nationally their senior year, but are welcome to participate in the state contest.

Q: Why are freshman and sophomores not allowed to compete nationally?

- A: National Right to Life sets the rules for the national contest and has decided against allowing them to participate.