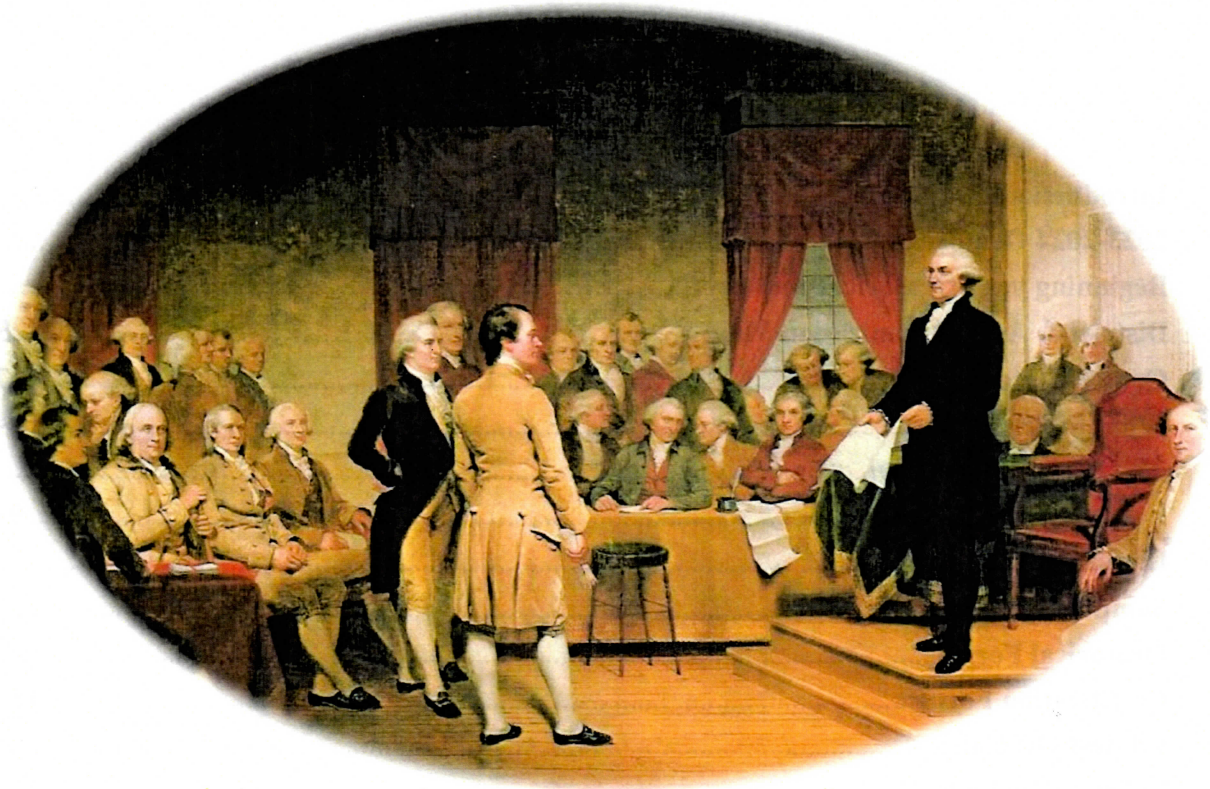




DEPARTMENT  
OF FLORIDA



# Oratorical Contest Student Manual 2023-2024

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>2023-2024 Oratorical Chairs</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Beginning the Oratorical Journey</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>District &amp; Area Organization Maps</b> .....	<b>5-6</b>
<b>Contest Dates and Awards</b> .....	<b>7-8</b>
<b>What to Prepare</b>	
<i>Prepared Oration</i> .....	<b>9</b>
<i>Assigned Topics</i> .....	<b>9-10</b>
<b>Eligibility/Attire</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Oratorical Forms</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Contest Officials</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Policy Statements</b> .....	<b>14-15</b>
<b>Inspiration and Resources</b> .....	<b>15-16</b>

## **Forms & Resources Needed**

- Sample Cover Sheet*
- Certification Form*
- Media Release*

## **INTRODUCTION: “A Constitutional Speech Contest”**

The American Legion Oratorical Contest exists to develop deeper knowledge and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution among high school students. Since 1938, the program has presented participants with an academic speaking challenge that teaches important leadership qualities, the history of our nation’s laws, the ability to think and speak clearly, and an understanding of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship.

Young orators earn some of the most generous college scholarships available to high school students. Over \$188,000 in scholarships can be awarded each year. The overall national contest winner gets an \$25,000 scholarship. Second place takes home \$22,500, and third gets \$20,000. Each department (state) winner who is certified into and participates in the national contest’s first round receives a \$2,000 scholarship. Those who advance past the first round receive an additional \$2,000 scholarship. The American Legion’s National Organization awards the scholarships, which can be used at any college or university in the United States.

High school students under age 20 are eligible. **Competition begins at the post level and advances to a state competition.** Legion department representatives certify one winner per state to the national contest, where department winners compete against each other in two speaking rounds. The contest caps off with a final round that decides the three top finishers.

**Speaking subjects must be on some aspect of the U.S. Constitution, with some emphasis on the duties and obligations of citizens to our government.**



## 2023-2024 ORATORICAL CHAIRS

Department Chair	Meri	West	904-704-0936	<a href="mailto:Oratorical@legionmail.org">Oratorical@legionmail.org</a>
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Central Area Chair	Robert	Bober	727-572-1725	<a href="mailto:dvcbob_bober@yahoo.com">dvcbob_bober@yahoo.com</a>
Eastern Area Chair	Laurel	Ross	407-227-5340	<a href="mailto:laureleross@gmail.com">laureleross@gmail.com</a>
Northern Area Chair	Meri	West	904-704-0936	<a href="mailto:oratorical@legionmail.org">oratorical@legionmail.org</a>
Southern Area Chair	Johnny	Castro	561-290-9980	<a href="mailto:southern@legionmail.org">southern@legionmail.org</a>
Laurene	Laurene	Flower	845-238-4723	<a href="mailto:laursandstrom@yahoo.com">laursandstrom@yahoo.com</a>
Western Area Chair	Terry	Jenrich	850-803-4837	<a href="mailto:tjames32@gmail.com">tjames32@gmail.com</a>

1 <sup>st</sup> District Chair	Shelby	Windham	850-305-3635	<a href="mailto:district1@legionmail.org">district1@legionmail.org</a>
2 <sup>nd</sup> District Chair	Doyle	Combs	931-982-4000	<a href="mailto:district2@legionmail.com">district2@legionmail.com</a>
3 <sup>rd</sup> District Chair	Huey	Forquet	787-879-1655	<a href="mailto:huey@hueyweb.com">huey@hueyweb.com</a>
4 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Doug	Hockenberry	727-514-3742	<a href="mailto:harleycsm@gmail.com">harleycsm@gmail.com</a>
5 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Cindy	Anderson	904-272-8894	<a href="mailto:cmeanderson54@yahoo.com">cmeanderson54@yahoo.com</a>
6 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Bill	Thompson	407-924-7148	<a href="mailto:wjt824@gmail.com">wjt824@gmail.com</a>
7 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Rick	Orzechowski	863-838-7000	<a href="mailto:district7@legionmail.org">district7@legionmail.org</a>
8 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Frank	Brunner	914-812-9927	<a href="mailto:usma1989@verizon.net">usma1989@verizon.net</a>
9 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Alan	Cohen	954-562-2547	<a href="mailto:VAR@legionmail.org">VAR@legionmail.org</a>
11 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Paul	Gish	931-409-0047	<a href="mailto:paul304@bellsouth.net">paul304@bellsouth.net</a>
12 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Joe	McNeil	321-725-7617	<a href="mailto:jmcneil9853@gmail.com">jmcneil9853@gmail.com</a>
13 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Eric	Loyd	603-903-7707	<a href="mailto:eloyd4314@yahoo.com">eloyd4314@yahoo.com</a>
14 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Thomas	Frank	305-302-9618	<a href="mailto:district14@legionmail.org">district14@legionmail.org</a>
15 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Frank	Smith	813-902-0471	<a href="mailto:fjsthjr@aol.com">fjsthjr@aol.com</a>
16 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Randall	McNabb	727-643-3325	<a href="mailto:randallmcnabb@yahoo.com">randallmcnabb@yahoo.com</a>
17 <sup>th</sup> District Chair	Jim	Bowers	407-484-6020	<a href="mailto:district17@legionmail.org">district17@legionmail.org</a>

**Note:**

- If you have any questions about the Oratorical Contest in your area you can contact the appropriate District, Area, and Department Chairs. They are here to assist you!
- The next page has a map of how the Districts and Areas are broken up so you can determine who the contact is for your local area.
- If you need any assistance with getting in touch with a chair or have any questions you can also contact American Legion, Department of Florida at 800-393-3378.



## BEGINNING YOUR ORATORICAL JOURNEY

The American Legion National Oratorical Contest is a multilevel contest. In order to get to Florida's State Oratorical Contest, you must participate in:

### *1<sup>st</sup> Level – Florida American Legion Post Contest:*

Reach out to your local American Legion Post to see when they are holding their contest. If you are the winner of the Post Level Contest, you will move on to the District Contest.

### *2<sup>nd</sup> Level – District Contest:*

There are 16 Districts in the State of Florida and each District will host an Oratorical Contest. The winner of the District contest will go onto the Area Contest (check out page 5 to see what District your county is in).

### *3<sup>rd</sup> Level – Area Contest:*

The state of Florida is broken up into 6 Areas. The District the Post is in will determine which Area contest the District winner will be a part of. The winner of the Area contest will go on to the State Contest. (check out page 5 to see what Area your District is in).

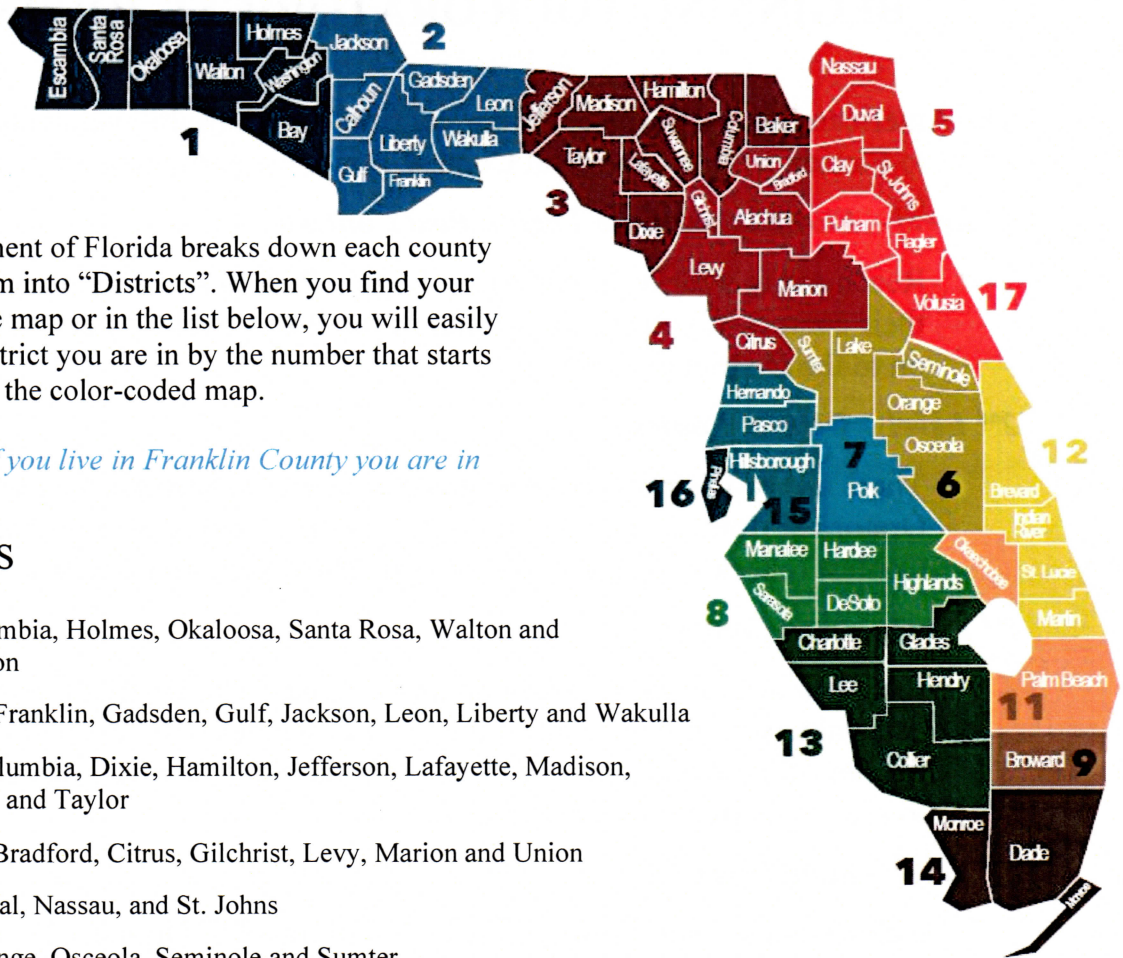
### *4<sup>th</sup> Level – State Level:*

6 contestants – one from each Area – will travel to Orlando, FL to compete for the State Oratorical Title. The first-place winner will go on to compete in the National Oratorical Contest.

### *5<sup>th</sup> Level – National Contest:*

The National Oratorical Contest is a three-day event where the winners from each state come together to compete in Indianapolis, Indiana.

# DISTRICT ORGANIZATION MAP



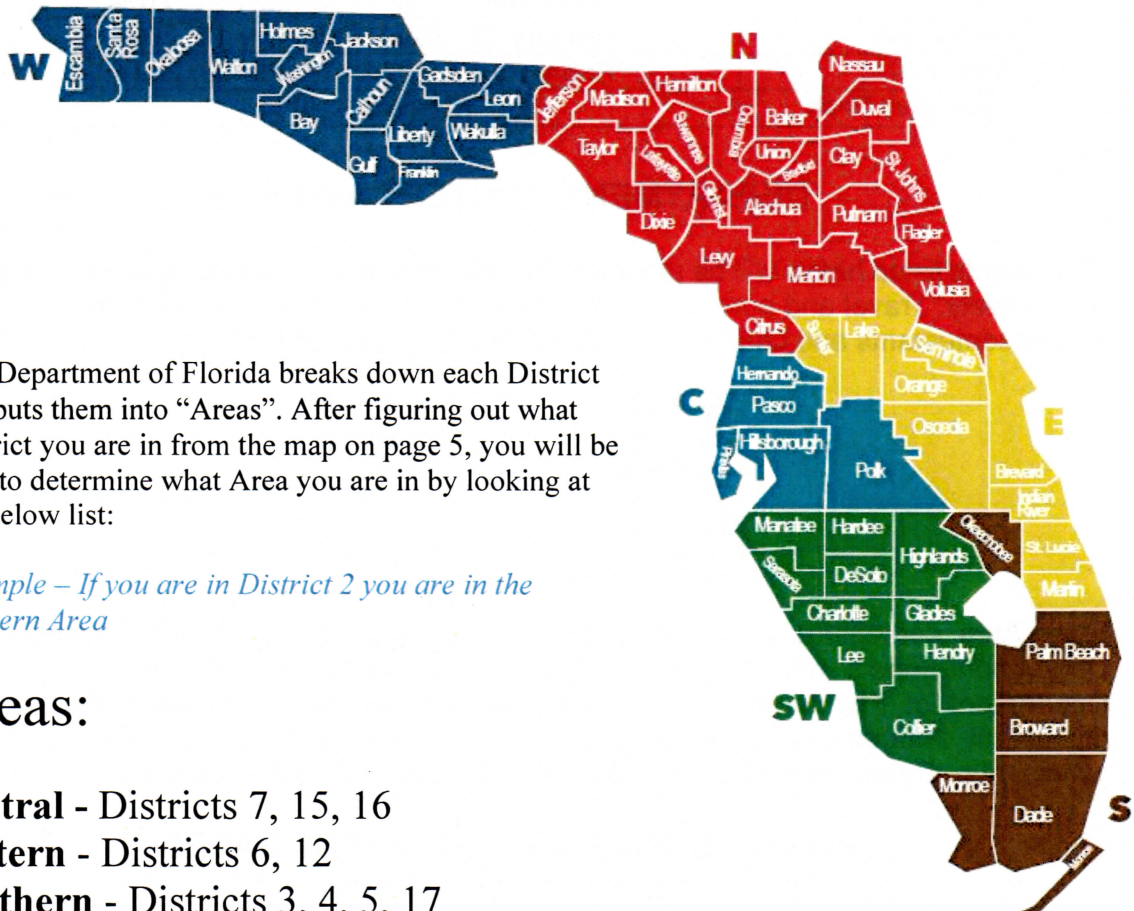
The Department of Florida breaks down each county and puts them into “Districts”. When you find your county in the map or in the list below, you will easily see what District you are in by the number that starts the list or by the color-coded map.

*Example – If you live in Franklin County you are in District 2*

## Districts

- 1 – Bay, Escambia, Holmes, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton and Washington
- 2 – Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Jackson, Leon, Liberty and Wakulla
- 3 – Baker, Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee and Taylor
- 4 – Alachua, Bradford, Citrus, Gilchrist, Levy, Marion and Union
- 5 – Clay, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns
- 6 – Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Sumter
- 7 – Polk County and that portion of Pasco County East of Interstate Hwy 75 (The American Legion Highway)
- 8 – Sarasota, Manatee, Highlands, DeSoto and Hardee, and to include Post 113 Rotonda West
- 9 – Broward County
- 11 – Palm Beach, Okeechobee and Clewiston from Hendry County, Indiantown from Martin County and that part of Martin County south of the St. Lucie River
- 12 – Brevard, Indian River, Martin (except Indiantown and that part of Martin County south of the St. Lucie River) and St. Lucie
- 13 – Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry (except Clewiston) and Lee, except Post 113 Rotonda West
- 14 – Dade and Monroe
- 15 – Hillsborough County, that portion of Pasco County, except New Port Richey, Hudson, Holiday and Seven Springs West of Interstate 75, (The American Legion Highway), and all of Hernando County
- 16 – Pinellas County and New Port Richey, Hudson, Holiday and Seven Springs from West Pasco County
- 17 – Flagler, Putnam, and Volusia

## AREA ORGANIZATION MAP



The Department of Florida breaks down each District and puts them into “Areas”. After figuring out what District you are in from the map on page 5, you will be able to determine what Area you are in by looking at the below list:

*Example – If you are in District 2 you are in the Western Area*

### Areas:

- Central** - Districts 7, 15, 16
- Eastern** - Districts 6, 12
- Northern** - Districts 3, 4, 5, 17
- Southern** - Districts 9, 11, 14
- Southwestern** - Districts 8, 13
- Western** - District 1, 2



## ORATORICAL CONTEST DATES

	Contest Date Recommendations	Updated Contest Dates
Post Level	December 1, 2023- January 21, 2024	Oviedo Memorial Post 243 1:00 pm, January 14, 2024
District Level	January 22, 2024- February 10, 2024	District 6 9:00 am, January 27, 2024
Area Level	February 11, 2024 – March 08, 2024	Eastern Area 9:00 am, February 24, 2024
Department Finals	March 30, 2024	March 30, 2024

## DEPARTMENT CONTEST AWARDS

First Place	\$2,500
Second Place	\$1,500
Third Place	\$1,000
Fourth place	\$500
Fifth Place	\$500
Sixth Place	\$500

## RECOMMENDED POST, DISTRICT & AREA AWARDS

	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	3 <sup>rd</sup> Place
Post Level	\$100	\$75	\$50
District Level	\$200	\$100	\$50
Eastern Area	\$300	\$150	

## NATIONAL CONTEST DATES

The 2024 National Finals will be May 17-19<sup>th</sup> in Hillsdale, MI at Hillsdale, MI. Quarterfinals and semifinal contests are scheduled for Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup>, with the finals scheduled for Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>.

Quarter-Final Round	May 18, 2024
Semi-Final Round	May 18, 2024
National Finals	May 19, 2024

All contestants and chaperones will arrive the Friday of the contest weekend. All contestants and chaperones will stay at the official contest hotel.

A mandatory pre-contest orientation session for all contestants will take place Friday evening of the contest weekend. A banquet honoring all contestants will be Sunday afternoon, following the National Championship contest. All contestants and chaperones will depart for home later that afternoon.

Travel and hotel accommodations will be paid by the National Organization for each contestant and one chaperone to attend the National Contest. More detailed information can be found at [www.legion.org/oratorical](http://www.legion.org/oratorical).

## NATIONAL CONTEST AWARDS

First Place	\$25,000.00
Second Place	\$22,000.00
Third Place	\$20,000.00

Contestants who participate in the National Quarter-Final round competition receive \$2,000.00. Contestants who participate in the National Semi-Final round competition receive an additional \$2,000.00, except the winner who advances to the National Finals.

## WHAT DO THE CONTESTANTS PREPARE?

### The 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. This aspect of the Constitution is the choice of the contestant but should have a strong emphasis on the obligations of a citizen to their government.

The Prepared Oration must be delivered in the English language. Contestants may have a hard copy of their oration in the first holding room to study but must give the copy to the escort when exiting the room to give their Prepared Oration. Cell phones or tablets are not allowed. 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. Signing is not allowed and will result in immediate disqualification. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song, provided proper attribution is made.

A hard copy of the Prepared Oration should be given to your Oratorical Chair on the day of the contest. The Prepared Oration you give should remain largely the same at each level of the contest though minor changes are allowed.

### The Assigned Topics

The assigned topic discourse may last between three and 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 aspect of the Constitution of the United States as listed under assigned topics at [www.legion.org/oratorical/topics](http://www.legion.org/oratorical/topics).

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. It is to be understood that the vast majority of the prepared oration and/or assigned topic must still be delivered in the English language.



## **ASSIGNED TOPICS FOR 2023-2024 ORATORICAL CONTEST**

### **Amendment 2**

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

### **Amendment 23**

The District constituting the seat of Government of the United States shall appoint in such manner as the Congress may direct.

A number of electors of President and Vice President equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives in Congress to which the District would be entitled if it were a State, but in no event more than the least populous State; they shall be in addition to those appointed by the State, but they shall be considered, for the purposes of the election of President and Vice President, to be electors appointed by a State; and they shall meet in the District and perform such duties as provided by the twelfth article of amendment.

### **Amendment 25, Section 3**

Whenever the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of this office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.

### **Amendment 5**

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself; not be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

## **CONTESTANT ELIGIBILITY**

Eligible participants in The American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest shall be citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States.

All contestants must be bona fide students herein described as any student under the age of twenty (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 is considered to be of high school level, commencing with grade nine (9) and terminated with grade twelve (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. Further, to participate in the Florida Contest, students must be residents of the State of Florida. Students whose parents are legal residents of another state must participate in that state.

## **CONTEST ATTIRE**

- Appropriate business attire is required for all contestants.
- Uniforms are NOT permitted.
- Contestants cannot wear awards, medals or ribbons from previous competitions or from other clubs or organizations.

## **ORATORICAL FORMS**

### **Application:**

**There is no application that needs to be filled out to participate** in the national Oratorical Contest. If you are interested in participating in this contest you will have to get in touch with your local American Legion Post and tell them that you would like to sign-up for their Post Level Contest.

You can contact The American Legion, Department of Florida for assistance with finding out who your local American Legion Post Chair is. Please contact:

Bekki Tibbs, Programs Director  
Phone #: 800-393-3378 ext.235  
E-mail: [programs@floridalegion.org](mailto:programs@floridalegion.org)

### **2023-2024 Certification Form:**

Once you have signed up to participate in a Post Level Oratorical Contest you will need to have your school principal complete the top portion of the 2023-2024 Certification Form which can be found as a separate attachment. *If you are home schooled, then your instructor and/or parent can fill out the top portion of the Certification Form*

This form must be complete and brought with you to the Post Level Contest so that the Post Oratorical Chair can complete their section of the page. If you are the winner of the Post Level Contest, this form will be forwarded to your District Oratorical Chair, so that they are aware of you participating in the District Level Oratorical Contest. This procedure is carried out for the Area and State Contests.



## CONTEST OFFICIALS

### JUDGES

One of the most important tasks in staging a successful Oratorical Contest is the appointment of qualified contest officials.

The judges are an integral part of the Oratorical Contest. Their qualifications should be 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 the success of the program.

**Post, District, and Area Contests are required to have three (3) judges at the contest.** The Department Finals requires five (5) 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 will render his final decision without consultation with other judges or any other person. Official score cards, which the Chair shall provide, are available for use by the judges.

The contest chair should meet with the judges prior to the contest to ensure that the judges have a thorough understanding of their responsibility and have the necessary materials for the contest.

### TABULATORS

Each contest should have **at least two (2) tabulators**; whose job it will be to make certain that the judges have fully tabulated and signed their scorecards before submitting them for final tabulation. Individuals appointed as tabulators should be well versed and experienced in working with numbers. They should be acquainted with the method of deciding a winner when two or more contestants receive the same placement point score total.

### TIMERS

Each contest should **have two (2) timers**, whose job is to time each oration. They should have knowledge of reading a stopwatch. Equipment needed is stopwatches and timecards.

## POLICY STATEMENTS

1. The following policies are set forth by the Oratorical Committee. These policies are in effect and shall be adhered to for all contests held in the state of Florida.
2. The National High School Oratorical Contest rules prevail unless stated differently in the Department of Florida policy statement.
3. Any qualified student who is a permanent resident of the state of Florida may enter the Oratorical Contest provided that he or she is **sponsored by a Legion Post**.
4. Contests can have no more than 6 contestants. If your contest has more than 6 contestants, you will need to divide your contest into two days to accommodate all of the contestants.
5. **Certification of winners** must be processed and forwarded to the next higher level immediately following the respective Contest.
6. *Once a contestant enters the contest at the Post level, he/she may **not** participate in any other Post contest. For Example: If Suzie is sponsored by Post 1 and does not win the Post Contest, she is ineligible to participate in another Post contest.*
7. *A **representative of the Post** sponsoring a contestant will accompany the contestant at each level of competition.*
8. At all levels, the contest time shall be given consideration in relationship to the distance the contestants must travel.
9. There shall be **three judges** for any level contest below the state finals.
10. Discretion shall be used when selecting Judges. People in education, forensics or debate, lawyers, judges, Toastmasters, and others familiar with speaking and the Constitution are excellent choices. For further clarification, contact Department Chair.
11. It is recommended that Legionnaires **not** be used as judges. However, if it is necessary to use a Legionnaire as a judge, he or she shall not be in uniform.
12. Prompting by parents, judges, or audience members will be considered disqualification of a contestant.
13. Props of any kind will not be allowed.
14. No contest below the State level will be held in a hotel/motel. All contests should be held in local Posts, high schools, or other appropriate facilities.
15. **The script shall be followed exactly as written so that each contestant will have experienced the contest, as it will be conducted at both the State Finals and National levels. DO NOT DEVIATE.**
16. Contests with only one contestant shall be conducted under regular contest conditions and rules. Judging is not required but may be performed at the chair's discretion.

17. At no time shall a volunteer, Legionnaire or Oratorical committee member be alone with a student. This is particularly important for escorts in the holding rooms or escorting students to the restrooms. Also, at no time shall a Legionnaire touch a student, except to shake hands. There should be no hugging or putting an arm around a student's shoulder or waist before, during or after the contest, including photographs. We expect our Legion members to be above reproach when dealing with students who are typically minors or very young adults.
18. A Post is not required to hold an Oratorical Contest. Many Posts don't have a Chair and have other obstacles to holding a contest, such as lack of participants. However, it's conceivable that the National office could send a qualified lead to an area where there will simply be no Post Contest. Department will try to find a Post in the same District that can sponsor the contestant. The contestant should have an opportunity to give their oration in a setting similar to a regular contest setting.

## **Inspiration and Resources for Students**

One of the best ways to learn more about the Oratorical Contest is to watch videos of past winners. Because we are in Florida, I usually start with past National winners from Florida. The National website has some videos of past winners but it's just as easy to see videos on Youtube.

Here is Co'Relous Bryant, the 2007 National winner from Jacksonville, FL:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSZgomRviwY&list=TLchp4qMKasug>.

And Geeta Minocha, the 2015 National winner from Ocala:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bSi3ofDpgY>.

## **Podcasts**

**Presidential.** A Podcast by Lillian Cunningham. In 44 episodes, notable historians and journalists explore the character, leadership and legacy of each of the American Presidents.

**Constitutional.** A Podcast by Lillian Cunningham. This series explores the Constitution and the people who framed it and reframed it—revolutionaries, abolitionists, suffragists, teetotalers, protesters, justices, presidents—in the ongoing struggle to form a more perfect union.

**More Perfect.** A Podcast by Radio Lab. Season 3 is all about the 27 Amendments and how the Supreme Court got so supreme. Seasons 1 and 2 are just as interesting.



**We The People.** A weekly show of constitutional debate hosted by National Constitution Center President and CEO Jeffrey Rosen where listeners can hear the best arguments on all sides of the constitutional issues at the center of American life.

## Websites Apps & Organizations

[www.Constitutioncenter.org](http://www.Constitutioncenter.org)

[www.ConstitutionFacts.com](http://www.ConstitutionFacts.com)

**National Archives Charters of Freedom:** <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs>

**The Avalon Project:** The American Constitution. A Documentary Record:  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject\\_menus/constpap.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/constpap.asp)

[www.USHistory.org](http://www.USHistory.org)

**C Span US Constitution Page:** <https://www.c-span.org/classroom/>

**Bill of Rights Institute:** <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/>

**Bill of Rights in Action:** <http://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/>

**Annenberg Classroom:** <http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/>

**LikeSo App.** Say It media, Inc. was created to improve communication skills through practice with mobile apps that helps users train against verbal habits, to motivate and track and measure their speech fitness. Only available for iPhone and iPad.

**The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute Great Communicator Debate Series:** <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/education/scholarship-programs/great-communicator-debate-series/>

**The Bill of Rights Institute:** This amazing non-profit educational organization works to engage, educate, and empower individuals with a passion for the freedom and opportunity that exist in a free society. They offer monthly debate preparation webinars, have a huge library of primary source documents, and offer a one week Constitution Academy in Washington, D.C. <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/about-us/institute/>

**Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation:** They host some of the best student debaters in the country at the Coolidge Cup tournament. Their virtual library has speeches, press conferences, primary sources, essays, videos and other artifacts relevant to great oratory. <https://www.coolidgefoundation.org/>