



Oratorical Contest **Officials Guide** 2024-2025

2024-2025 ORATORICAL CHAIRS

Oratorical Committee				
Department Chair	Doug	Hockenberry	727-514-3742	Oratorical@legionmail.org
Central Area	Robert	Bober	727-572-1725	dvcbob_bober@yahoo.com
Eastern Area	Bruce	Pagel	352-283-5941	btpagel@gmail.com
Northern Area	Huey	Fourquet	757-879-1655	huey@flposst83.org
Southern Area	Traci	Caicedo	561-239-5104	traci.l.caicedo.mil@mail.mil
Southwestern Area	Laurene	Allen-Flower	845-238-4723	laursandstrom@yahoo.com
Western Area	James	Wood	850-502-9468	armyguyindestin@embargmail.com
1st District	Nicole	Dickson	850-207-7445	franticpoet@gmail.com
2nd District				
3rd District	Huey	Fourquet	787-879-1655	huey@flpost83.com
4th District	Doug	Hockenberry	727-514-3742	oratorical@legionmail.org
5th District	Meri	West	904-704-0936	meriwest454@gmail.com
6th District	Ron	Beasley	321-217-1380	rab5234@yahoo.com
7th District	Doug	Law	843-538-6682	douglas.law72@gmail.com
8th District	Misty	Tomanski	567-801-8606	mistyllynn83@gmail.com
9th District	Alan	Cohen	954-562-2547	VAR@legionmail.org
11th District	Paul	Gish	931-409-0047	paul304@bellsouth.net
12th District				
13th District	Eric	Loyd	603-903-7707	schoolmedals@legionmail.org
14th District				
15th District	Glenn	Juman	571-277-5276	gjuman@yahoo.com
16th District	Bob	Bober	727-512-1725	dvcbob_bober@yahoo.com
17th District				

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

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

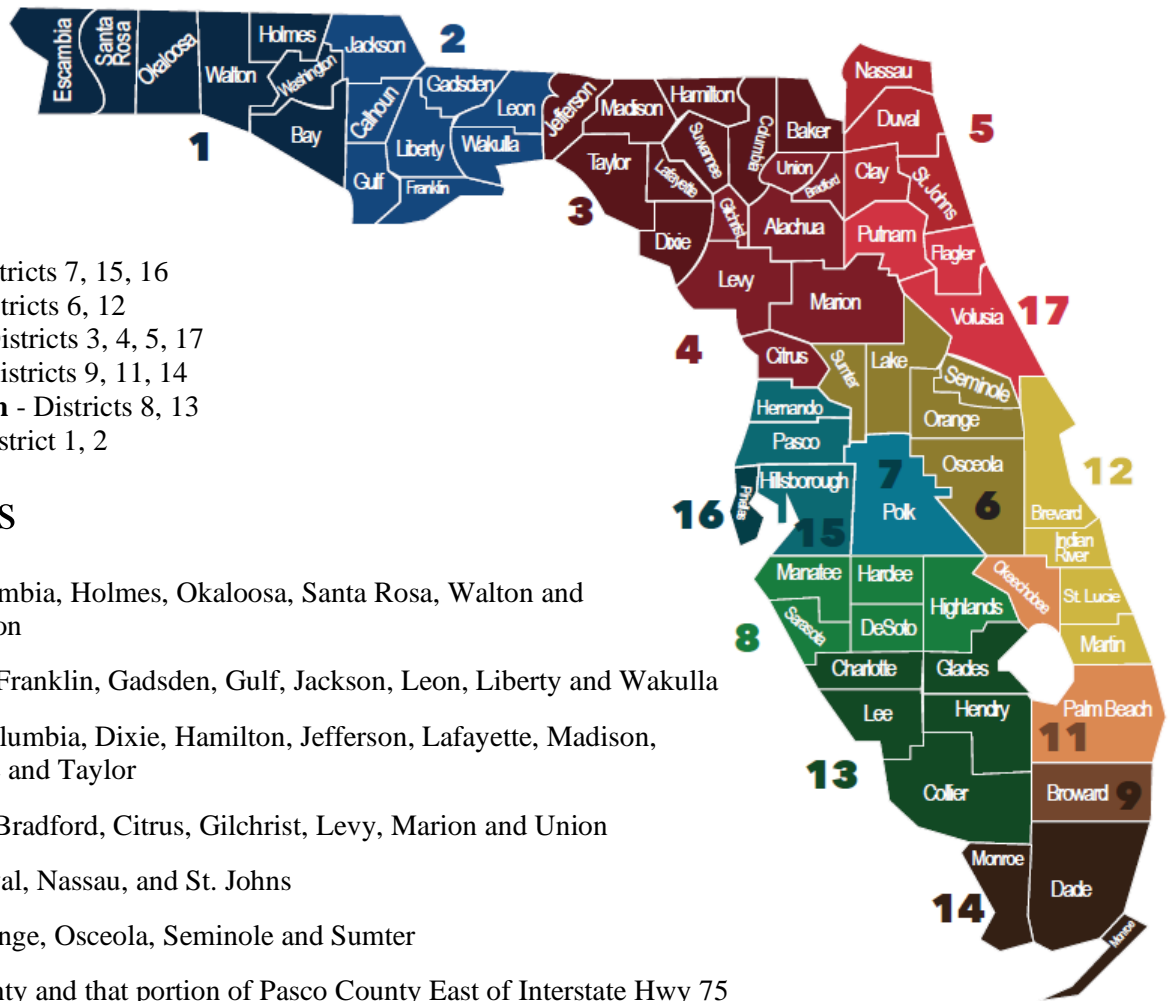


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ORATORICAL CONTEST DATES AND AWARDS

DEPARTMENT CONTEST DATES

	Contest Date Recommendations	Updated Contest Dates
Post Level	December 1, 2024- January 19, 2025	Oviedo Memorial Post 243 9:00am, January 11, 2025
District Level	January 20, 2025- February 9, 2025	District 6 9:00 am, January 25, 2025
Area Level	February 10, 2025 – February 23, 2025	Eastern Area 9:00 am, February 22, 2025
Department Finals	March 15, 2025	March 15, 2025

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 st Place	2 nd Place	3 rd Place
Post Level	\$100	\$75	\$50
District Level	\$200	\$100	\$50
Eastern Area	\$300	\$150	

NATIONAL CONTEST DATES

The 2025 National Finals will be May 16-18th in Hillsdale, MI. Quarterfinal and semifinal contests are scheduled for Saturday, May 17th, with the finals scheduled for Sunday, May 18th.

NATIONAL CONTEST AWARDS

First Place	\$25,000
Second Place	\$22,500
Sixth Place	\$20,000

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. Singing 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 their 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.

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 2024-2025 ORATORICAL CONTEST

Amendment 1

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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 18, Sections 1-3

Section 1. After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

Section 2. The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Section 3. This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

Amendment 26, Sections 1-2

Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

Section 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

JUDGES INSTRUCTIONS

The Judges are a very 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 the State Champion.

The contests shall have three judges. No publicity shall be given to the names of the Judges in advance of the contest. During the contest, the Judges shall be seated in different locations in the auditorium, and each judge shall render their final decision without consultation with other Judges or any other person. Official Score Cards will be furnished by the Contest Chair for use of the Judges in the contest. The Chair will meet with the Judges at a time and place arranged by the Chair prior to the contest. The purpose of this meeting is for the final briefing and to ascertain that the judges have a thorough understanding of their responsibility and have the necessary materials for the contest. Judges should carefully study and possess a thorough understanding of the Score Card and scoring system. This is to include all areas under Content and Speaking Skills on the Score Card. A Judge having any questions should consult with the Chair prior to the Contest.

Lack of emphasis in the Prepared Oration and the Assigned Topic on the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen must result in the Judges downgrading the contestant involved. **Judges may downgrade a contestant up to a total of 10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution.** The Chair 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 Chair, following the last Assigned Topic, will proceed to a private room for the final review and tabulation.

Each judge shall insert the total number of points credited to the contestant in the Final Total Points blocks and insert their choice of placement of each contestant in accordance with the highest total point scores in the Record of Choice blocks. If a tie exists in the total point scores on a Judge's Score Card, the Judge must go back and make adjustments in their scoring of the tied contestants so that no two contestants have the same Total Points Score, which will enable the judge to rank one contestant above the other in the Record of Choice blocks.

SUGGESTIONS TO JUDGES

It is suggested that prior to the contest, each judge should carefully study the point scoring system in relation to the factors to be considered during the presentation of the prepared oration and the assigned topic discussion by each contestant, namely, *content of oration and speaking skills*. Listed below you will find items which should be given attention in specific areas (see listing of point values on Official Score Card).

CONTENT

1. Originality, freshness, directness, applies knowledge to topic
 - Is there an original and fresh approach to the topic?
 - Does it relate directly to the subject?
 - Is information applied to aspects of the subject?
 - Does the information flow directly to the audience?
 - Does the speaker stay on topic?
 - Does the assigned topic speech appear to be “canned?”
2. Skill in selecting examples, description, analogies, specific data
 - Are examples applicable?
 - Do the illustrations appear as an “axe to grind” not exactly related to the subject?
 - Is adequate information provided on examples or description to inform the audience fully on the points?
 - Is proper credit given to quotations or subject matter borrowed from authorities?
 - Are specific data utilized to enrich the subject matter?
3. Logic (Correctness of Inference)
 - Are illustrations supported by logic or facts?
 - Are conclusions properly drawn?
 - Are there inconsistencies in the use of application of the logic?
 - Are inferences made without proper support or logic?
4. Comprehensiveness of knowledge; knows subject matter
 - Is plagiarism involved?
 - Does the speaker show a broad grasp of this subject?
 - Does the overall speech effectively demonstrate comprehensiveness and unity of thought(s)?
 - Does the overall impression outweigh the component parts?

- Does the assigned topic speech appear to be memorized to the point where discussion value is lost?
- Is the total speaking informational and educational for the audience?
- Is an overall humbleness (or respect) evident in both the prepared and assigned topic speeches?

SPEAKING SKILLS

1. Voice and Diction

- Does the voice used detract from the content? Pitch? Nasal quality?
- Does the speaker use the proper volume for the physical conditions that surround them?
- Do the words and sentences run together? Articulation? Enunciation?
- Are there errors in punctuation?

2. Style: Language use, word arrangement, transition, word selection

- Is the language use appropriate?
- Are the sentences succinct?
- Are the sentences involved to the point that immediate interpretation is not easy? Grammar?
- Does the speaker get lost with many extraneous clauses or phrases?
- Are the words easily identifiable for meanings? Do they fit?
- Is sentence and paragraph transition smooth and continuous?
- Is there a proper introduction, a main body of the speech and a summary or conclusion?

3. Body Action: Poise, eye contact, posture, gestures

- Is the speaker at ease while speaking?
- Does the speaker have eye contact with all of the audience so that they appear to be speaking to all of them?
- Is their posture of an alert nature?
- Do their movements and gestures enhance or detract from the content and delivery?
- Is the speaker too dramatic?
- Does the speaker's body action and delivery give the appearance of cockiness or "know-it-all" attitude?

Lack of emphasis on the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen to their government **MUST** result in the judge downgrading the score of the contestant involved.

BARRIERS TO IMPARTIAL JUDGING

FIRST OR LAST SPEAKER IS BEST

We tend to remember first and last speakers best, so they have an advantage over other speakers. The first speaker because they become a reference point and the last because they are more easily remembered. As a judge, we need to be equally attentive to the middle speakers.

PREJUDICES AND PERSONAL PREFERENCES

Tastes, beliefs, preferences, and prejudices are the most prevalent barriers to unbiased judging. Try to remember to judge not what the speaker is or appears to be, but what the speaker is saying.

UNDERDOG EFFECT

Resist the temptation to mark highly because you feel the speaker deserves to win. Use the judging form scrupulously.

HALO EFFECT

Resist giving high marks because the speaker dresses well or has a dynamic delivery. Some speakers may look very polished and are given high marks even if they do not speak well.

REVERSE HALO EFFECT

The Reverse Halo Effect happens when a contestant is judged to have a single undesirable trait, and is marked down in other, unrelated areas. Don't allow one weak trait to influence your perception of the person's speech as a whole.

NOT THE NORM

Outside of the oratorical Contest Rules, there is no "norm" for speakers. As a judge, consider what is usually the norm for a good speech. Ask yourself if you expect everyone to fit that norm. If so, you may be out of step and impartial.

SCRATCH TALLY SHEET FOR JUDGES

Scratch sheets are provided to each Judge for each contestant. This sheet will enable Judges to make notes during the orations to refer to, if needed. It also allows the judge to easily add their scores and make note of any penalty points accrued. These sheets and the Official Judging Scorecards will be collected at the end of the day.

OFFICIAL JUDGING SCORECARD

The method of judging, scoring, and point values indicated on the Score Card were devised especially for this contest.

They were devised to provide Judges with criteria to select fairly and adequately the best contestant of the contest.

To attain this objective Judges must become familiar with all factors involved.

Quotations are to be indicated as such, and if the quotations are more than ten (10) words in length, the name of the author must be given. The penalty for plagiarism is disqualification.

At the close of the contest Judges must fill out the Score Card completely in accordance with the contest rules, total all columns and affix signatures.

Tabulators will collect Score Cards from Judges at the close of the contest and tabulate the results under the supervision of the Chair.

At the proper time, in accordance with contest rules, the Chair or their representative, will announce the results of the contest and introduce the Judges to the contestants and audience.

Judges will not discuss and phase of the content of their judging methods with contestants, parents, coaches, escorts, or others (outside of the Chair) following the contest. Judges are encouraged to meet the students after the contest to give constructive criticism but should never divulge any details as to how the student was ranked or scored.

Chairs and tabulators are not permitted to divulge any information from the Judge's Score Card. Persons interested in the scoring for professional reasons may, upon written request to the Department Program Director, be mailed copies with the names of Judges omitted.

SCRATCH TALLY SHEET FOR JUDGES

Judge # _____ PREPARED ORATION

Contestant Number: _____		Does the Contestant's Oration Relate to Some Aspect of The Constitution of the United States with emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government? _____ YES _____ NO	
A. CONTENT	SCORE	REMARKS or NOTES	
1. Originality – Freshness, directness, application of knowledge on Topic	(12)		
2. Skill in Selecting Examples, Description, Analogies, Specific Data	(12)		
3. Logic (Correctness of Inferences)	(12)		
4. Comprehensiveness of Knowledge Knows the Subject Matter	(16)		
B. SPEAKING SKILLS			
1. Voice and Diction	(6)		
2. Style: Language Use, Word Arrangement, Word Selection, Transitions	(6)		
3. Body Action: Poise, Eye Contact, Posture, Gestures	(6)		
TIME PENALTY POINTS			
TENTATIVE TOTAL			

Tentative Total = (Total Content Points + Total Speaking Skill Points) – Time Penalty Points



THE AMERICAN LEGION

HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM - "A CONSTITUTIONAL SPEECH CONTEST"

JUDGE'S SCORECARD



NAME OF JUDGE: _____

A. CONTENT		Contestants					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Was the speech original, fresh, and direct, applying the student's knowledge?	Prepared Oration 12 points Assigned Topic 4 points						
2. Did the student skillfully select examples, descriptions, analogies, and specific data?	Prepared Oration 12 points Assigned Topic 4 points						
3. Was the speech logical, well organized, and developed?	Prepared Oration 12 points Assigned Topic 4 points						
4. Did the student show a comprehensiveness of knowledge of the subject matter?	Prepared Oration 16 points Assigned Topic 6 points						
B. SPEAKING SKILLS							
1. Did the student use volume, rate, pitch, and diction effectively?	Prepared Oration 8 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						
SUB-TOTAL							
PENALTIES: 1 point for each minute or fraction thereof over or under allotted time	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic						
1-10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution							
Final Total Points							
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: _____

TABULATOR INSTRUCTIONS

Each contest at all levels below the Department Finals shall have three (3) Judges and two (2) Tabulators. The Judge's score card shall be completely tabulated and signed by the judge. The score cards will be numbered in the upper right-hand corner corresponding to the Judge's number.

The Tabulator shall add up the total **Record of Choice** figures for each contestant. The contestant receiving the **highest score** will be declared the winner. In the event of a two-contestant tie, the contestant with a majority of the Judges Record of Choice will be the winner.

When three or more contestants are tied, the contestant with the highest Final Total Points shall be the winner. In case of a tie on the record of choice and Final Total Points, the Judges will reconsider their scores and make a change.

The lowest number (1) for Record of Choice should be the same as the highest Final Total Points.

Only whole numbers will be recorded by the Judges when scoring.

The only person authorized to announce the winners at the contest is the Chair.

Tabulators are not permitted to divulge any information related to their contest.

TABULATION CARD

The American Legion Department of Florida Oratorical Contest

DATE: _____ POST / DISTRICT / AREA / DEPARTMENT: (ADD LOCATION) _____

Contestants-Record of Choice								Contestants-Final Total Points (for a 3-Way tiebreaker Only)							
Judge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Judge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1								1							
2								2							
3								3							
4															
5															
6								6							
7								7							
Total								Total							

SAMPLE

ALL TABULATOR'S SIGNATURES REQUIRED

Signature: _____ Signature: _____ Signature: _____

TIMEKEEPER INSTRUCTIONS

There shall be two (2) Timekeepers for the contest located on the main floor and in full view of the contestants as they deliver their orations.

THE TIMEKEEPERS SHALL BE EQUIPPED WITH

- ☐ Stopwatches (2)
- ☐ Timekeeper Record Card
- ☐ Timecards numbers 8, 9, and 10 for Prepared Oration
- ☐ Timecards numbers 3, 4, and 5 for Assigned Topic
- ☐ Clipboards
- ☐ Pencils

The Chair will meet with the Timekeepers prior to the contest. It is recommended that the Timecards have the large, bold numbers printed on both sides. When a Timekeeper is holding up a card for the contestant to see, the audience behind the Timekeepers can see which minute mark the contestant is at.

TIMING PROCEDURE

1. Begin when the contestant begins their Prepared oration and stop when the contestant ceases to speak.
2. Enter exact time consumed (in minutes and seconds) for both the Prepared Oration and the Assigned Topic on the Timekeeper Record Card
3. Prepared Oration must not be less than eight (8) or more than ten (10) minutes. After eight (8) minutes have been consumed, hold the number 8 card so that it can be easily seen by the contestant for ten (10) seconds. Do not wave or move the card from side to side. Repeat when nine and ten minutes have been consumed.
4. Assigned Topic must be less than three (3) or more than five (5) minutes. Repeat the process explained above, using numbered cards 3, 4, and 5.

REPORTING TIME CONSUMED

1. The Chair will advise you how you should report time to them.
2. You shall report minutes and seconds consumed.
3. For the benefit of the Judges, the Chair shall announce the time consumed by each contestant for both the Prepared Oration and the Assigned Topic immediately after each contestant speaks. The Chair will announce any penalty incurred by the contestant for using more or less than the allotted time. They shall also advise of no penalty.

TIMEKEEPER CARD

The American Legion Department of Florida Oratorical Contest

DATE _____ POST / DISTRICT / AREA / DEPARTMENT _____

Contestant Number	Time Consumed Prepared Oration	Time Consumed Assigned Topic
Contestant 1	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 2	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 3	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 4	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 5	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 6	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____

Signature of Timekeeper: _____ Signature of Timekeeper: _____

Printed Name of Timekeeper: _____ Printed Name of Timekeeper: _____

BOTH TIMEKEEPERS' SIGNATURES ARE REQUIRED