

AMERICAN LEGION Department of ILLINOIS



89TH ANNUAL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

A CONSTITUTIONAL SPEECH CONTEST

A Scholarship Opportunity

For students seeking an academic challenge and an opportunity to earn college scholarship money, the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program is a natural fit. For more than 80 years, this constitutional speech contest has educated youth on our nation's founding document, with an emphasis on citizenship.

The main purpose of the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program is to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the U.S. Constitution among students. Participants also grow in leadership ability, their capacity to think and speak clearly and intelligently, and understanding of the rights, responsibilities, obligations and privileges of U.S. citizens.

\$11,700 in Scholarships

Scholarships awarded may be used to attend any college/university, junior college or vocational educational institution within the United States. They must be used within 4 years from high school graduation (unless interrupted by service in the Armed Forces). Funds for scholarships are provided by department membership dues.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AMERICAN LEGION CONTACT TODAY! (LISTED BELOW)



 Name _____

 Phone _____

 Email _____

RULES & REGULATIONS

SUBJECT TO BE USED FOR PREPARED ORATION

The subject to be used for the prepared oration in the Oratorical Contest must be on some aspect of the U.S. Constitution with emphasis on a citizen's duties and obligations 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 (8) or more than ten (10) minutes for delivery. The penalty for plagiarism will be disqualification. It must bear a title which is to be announced by the contest Moderator when he or she introduces the contestant; i.e.: "Contestant No. 1, the title of their oration is", etc.

In the prepared oration and/or assigned topic, quotations must always be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than ten words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally. It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases in a foreign language to develop the argument, establish a point, etc. It should be understood that the vast majority of the prepared oration and/or assigned topic must still be delivered in English. Singing is not permitted and will result in immediate disqualification. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song(s) provided proper attribution is made. A raised platform is not mandatory; however, it is strongly recommended. The use of notes, amplification, lectern or speaker's stand or any manner of prompting is not permitted. Props are not permitted. *For a full review of Oratorical Contest Rules and Regulations go to: <http://www.legion.org/oratorical/rules>*

CONTESTANT CERTIFICATION

Each of the (5) five Divisions may have up to three (3)* contestants compete at the Department of Illinois Oratorical Contest that is scheduled for March 7, 2026. *Divisions may have and are limited to NOT MORE than (2) two Alternates.

The Oratorical Application, Communication Agreement and a sponsor check in the amount of \$175 for each contestant must be sent to the respective Division Americanism Chairman no later than January 16, 2026. It is highly recommended that either the Post, County, or District host a contest. **The Division level is required to host a CONTEST or at minimum a detailed contest ORIENTATION with contestants ensuring they are prepared for the next level of competition.**

CONTESTANT ELIGIBILITY

All contestants must be Lawful Permanent Residents of the United States of America and bona fide students in secondary schools (Public, Parochial, Military, Private and Home Schools) under the age of 20 years on the date of the National Finals Program whose academic curriculum is of Public High School level, and enrolled in classes equivalent to the regular 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades on January 1 of the year when such National Programs are conducted.

The assigned topic discourse must not consume less than three (3) minutes or more than five (5) 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 full text for the assigned topic, will be made known to each contestant approximately five (5) minutes prior to the time of delivery. The topic will be on some phase of the U.S. Constitution, selected from Articles and Sections as listed under assigned topics for this year's contest in this brochure.

2026 ASSIGNED TOPICS

By action of the National Americanism Commission, the Assigned Topics shall be used in ALL 2026 contests. They are as follows:

Amendment IV — The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Article III, Section 3 — Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

Article IV, Section — The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.

Article VI, Clause 3 — The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS SCHOLARSHIPS

Semi-finals (Division Level Contest)

1st Place at Division..... advances to State Contest
 2nd Place Receives \$500 scholarship
 3rd Place Receives \$200 scholarship
 4th* PlaceReceives \$150 scholarship
 5th* PlaceReceives \$150 scholarship

*Divisions wishing to award 6 scholarships can reduce the 4th and 5th place scholarship to \$100 to award a 6th place \$100 scholarship

Finals

1st Place Receives a \$2000 scholarship
 2nd Place Receives a \$1500 scholarship
 3rd Place Receives a \$1200 scholarship
 4th Place Receives a \$1000 scholarship
 5th Place Receives a \$1000 scholarship

NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS

1st Place.....\$25,000.00
 2nd Place.....\$22,500.00
 3rd Place.....\$20,000.00

First Round Contestants will receive a **\$2,000.00 scholarship** and each Second Round Contestant who does not proceed to the National Finals will receive a **\$2,000.00 scholarship**.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION and DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS FORMS:
WWW.ILLEGION.ORG

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2025 AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF ILLINOIS ORATORICAL CONTEST WINNER CHAITHRIKA SRIPATHI (PICTURED ON COVER)

Pictured below (from left to right) are 2024 Finalists Samuel Maue, Harshee Shaw, April Zhang (1st place; advanced to Nationals for second consecutive year), and Samantha Findysz.

visit <https://www.illegion.org/programs-services/americanism-commission/> for a full list of previous Department of Illinois Scholarship winners.



AMERICANISM COMMISSION:
Chairman: Micheal M. Carder
Vice Chairman: Celeste Latham

Members by Division:
1st Division - Micheal M. Carder
2nd Division - Celeste N. Latham
3rd Division - Norman W. Flowers, Jr.
4th Division - Mark Young
5th Division - Ralph W. Rounds, II

NATIONAL SEMI FINAL
OR FINALS SCHOLARSHIP
AWARD WINNERS FROM ILLINOIS

- 1943 BURTON BERNARD, GRANITE CITY
- 1959 ROGER R. MAJAK, LANSING
- 1973 JOHN WESLEY FROST, PEORIA
- 1975 GRETCHEN WINTER, CHICAGO
- 1977 MARK R. THOMPSON, GLENN ELLYN
- 1982 WILLIAM KEPHART, JR., CHILLICOTHE
- 2004 JACQUELINE KEIDEL, BERWYN
- 2005 JOSHUA WILSON, GRIDLEY
- 2007 JARED CANFIELD, NAPERVILLE
- 2009 HEIDI ERBSEN, PEARL CITY
- 2012 ATHENA SALDANHA, SCHUAMBURG
- 2015 ROWAN MACWAN, NAPERVILLE
(PICTURED ON FRONT COVER)
- 2019 CALEB MAUE, HOMER GLEN