

# **THE AMERICAN LEGION ORATORICAL CONTEST**

**Since 1938, The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program has encouraged the nation's high school students to study the U.S. Constitution and to hone their public speaking skills.**

## **About the Oratorical Contest**

### **“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. The program has featured numerous politicians and prominent contestants over the years, including former president candidate Alan Keyes and CNN anchor Lou Dobbs.

Young orators earn some of the most generous college scholarships available to high school students. Over \$138,000 in scholarships can be awarded each year. The overall national contest winner gets an \$18,000 scholarship. Second place takes home \$16,000, and third gets \$14,000. Each department (state) winner who is certified into and participates in the national contest's first round receives a \$1,500 scholarship. Those who advance past the first round receive an additional \$1,500 scholarship. The American Legion's National Organization awards the scholarships, which can be used at any college or university in the United States.

The four finalists in The American Legion Department of Minnesota Contest receive scholarships which may be used to attend any post secondary educational institution in the United States. The winner receives \$1500; runner-up \$1000; 3rd place \$700; 4th place \$500.

2<sup>nd</sup> District American Legion Department of Minnesota Contest winner receives \$350; runner-up \$250; 3<sup>rd</sup> Place \$150

Your local American Legion Post may also offer scholarships as well.

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. Speeches are eight to 10 minutes long; three- to five-minute speeches on an assigned topic also are part of the contest.

The American Legion Post serving the area will assist in the local contest and should be contacted if they do not contact you.

Each public, parochial, military, or private high school is eligible to conduct an elimination contest to name a local champion.

# The Prepared Oration

The oration must be on some aspect of the 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.

Contestants may have a copy of their prepared oration while waiting in the first holding room. They may consult the copy until they exit to begin the contest. The copy will then be surrendered to the contest official monitoring the first holding room.

Quotations must always 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.

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.

# Assigned Topics

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 assigned topic shall be drawn by the contest official in full view of the audience immediately before the last speaker begins delivery of his or her prepared oration and will be made known to the audience and 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 the current year's contest in this brochure.

All contestants at each contest level are required to speak in the English language on the same assigned topic.

## Assigned Topics for 2019 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 4

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.

### Amendment 13

1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

### Amendment 21

1. The eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.
2. The transportation or importation into any State, Territory, or possession of the United States for delivery or use therein of intoxicating liquors, in violation of the laws thereof, is hereby prohibited.
3. This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by conventions in the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

# Rules and Regulations

## Eligibility

Eligible participants must 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 home school). The curriculum of the school must be considered to be of high school level, commencing with grade 9 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. Contestants must either be legally domiciled within or attend an educational institution within the department that they enter competition. Contestants can enter competition through only one department.

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.

The three finalists of the national contest are ineligible for further participation at any level.

## Regulations

The official in charge of the contest conducts a drawing to determine the order by which contestants will appear. The contest chairman introduces each contestant, then announces the title of the contestant's prepared oration. The audience must refrain from applause until the judges make a decision.

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.

Contestants and audience members may not use any form of electronic/digital data gathering, receiving and/or transmitting equipment.

Contestants must deliver their prepared oration in no fewer than eight minutes and no more than 10 minutes. The assigned topic runs no fewer than three minutes and no more than five minutes.

The contest chairman names an official timer who keeps an accurate time record of each contestant. The timer is located on the main floor in full view of the contestants and will begin timing each contestant at the start of the prepared oration. The timer should have a stopwatch and time cards displaying the numbers 8, 9 and 10 for the prepared oration. When eight minutes have gone by, the time warning card with the number 8 is placed in full view of the speaker, followed by 9 and 10 accordingly. The same procedure is used during the assigned topic discourse with cards bearing 3, 4 and 5. The contest chairman will announce the time each contestant uses for the prepared oration and the assigned topic immediately after each contestant speaks in front of the judges.

Until their turn to speak, contestants must remain in a private room where other speakers' discourses cannot be heard. The contest chairman will appoint an individual to supervise each

contestant. As the contestants conclude their prepared orations, they must return to a soundproof waiting room. Speakers who conclude their assigned topic discourse may not associate with contestants who have not finished speaking.

Approximately five minutes before the start of the assigned topic discourse, the first contestant will be informed of the assigned topic drawn. He or she retires to privacy under the direction of an individual appointed by the contest chairman; it's this individual's duty to see that the contestant doesn't consult any text matter or notes with any connection to the subject. Contestants may only reference the actual words of the topic provided on the card drawn.

Each succeeding contestant will be called upon in the order that he or she previously appeared. He or she will also, in turn, be informed of the topic of the assigned topic discourse and shall then be escorted to the same privacy provided for the first contestant.

Contestants must give their prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse to receive the scholarship monies to which they are entitled.

## **What to wear**

Uniforms are not permitted. Appropriate business attire is required for all contestants. Contestants may not wear awards and medals from previous competitions.

## **Travel expenses**

The American Legion pays travel and lodging expenses for department winners and their chaperones. A chaperone over 21 years of age must accompany each contestant.

The American Legion does 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 accepted into the national competition. The American Legion selects an air carrier for contestants' travel.

## **Tabulators**

The contest chairman will appoint no fewer than three tabulators for the department finals contest. It's their responsibility to review the judges' scorecards to be certain they are fully tabulated and signed before being 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 property of The American Legion National Headquarters.

# **Judges**

Judges are an important part of the oratorical contest. Their qualifications are carefully considered, as their decisions are final and must be reached without bias. Impartial judging is the key to fairness and success of the program, which selects a national champion.

All department finals and the national contest have five judges, who are not allowed to receive any publicity before the event. During the contest, judges sit in different locations, and each renders his or her final decision without any sort of consultation.

Judges are advised to downgrade contestants who fail to emphasize the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse on a citizen's duties and obligations to our government. Judges can downgrade a contestant up to 10 points for failure to speak about the Constitution. The contest chairman will announce any time violations for contestants. A penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof, shall be assessed toward the contestant's total score.

Following the last assigned topic discourse, the judges, timekeepers, tabulators and contest chairman may proceed to a private room for final review and tabulation.

# **Television and radio**

Live television and radio broadcasts are permitted in all contests, as well as filming, taping or other types of media for later showing, provided:

1. Lighting and other site conditions are the same for all contestants.
2. Filming or broadcasts in no way distract the contestants or interfere with the pre-announced scheduled time of the contest.
3. The normal speaking voice of the contestant is not interfered with or amplified within the auditorium.
4. The American Legion is in no way financially obligated without prior approval.