



Department of Missouri

Briefing for

The American Legion High School

Oratorical Scholarship Program

A Constitutional Speech Contest



2023 High School Oratorical Contest Winners

left to right

Department Commander, Rose Noonan

4th Place Winner, Svetlana Ehlers – Kansas City - \$2,000 scholarship

1st Place Winner, Jana Rawashdeh – St. Peters - \$5,000 scholarship

2nd Place Winner, Joseph Bulmahn – Imperial - \$2,500 scholarship

3rd Place Winner, Chantal Ogbeifun – Republic - \$2,250 scholarship

Oratorical Chair, Judge Duane Benton

For use when briefing educators, students, and others about this program

The American Legion High School ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM *A Constitutional Speech Contest*

Performance and public speaking are popular with high school students. Yet, there are very few national performance and public speaking contests for high school students—and almost none offer scholarships. H & C Education Consulting—an admissions consulting firm founded by Ivy League Ph.D. graduates—rated five contests as the tops in the nation:

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program—a Constitutional Speech Contest. (No Entry Fee)

National Association of Teachers of Singing Competition (\$75 Entry Fee)

National Speech and Debate Association – State and National Competitions (Fees Vary)

Poetry Out Loud – Poetry Recitation (No Entry Fee)

Young Arts – Classical music, dance, voice, film, writing (\$35 Entry Fee)

The American Legion High School Oratorical contest:

- meets the guidelines of the Missouri State High School Activities Association.
- appears in the National Association of Secondary School Principals Advisory List of Contests and Activities.
- partners with the National Speech & Debate Association, the honor society for high school students.

The purpose of The American Legion contest is to develop students’:

- Knowledge and appreciation of the United States Constitution.
- Ability to think and speak clearly and critically.
- Acceptance of the duties and responsibilities of American citizenship.
- Awareness of the rights and privileges of American Citizenship.

The Oratorical program changes the lives of students by:

- building confidence
- improving communication
- increasing critical thinking skills
- preparing students for college
- providing speech and debate activities that provide life skills vital to future success.

The program’s speech activities and competitions offer students:

- the opportunity to improve their creative skills
- development of their ability to communicate ideas
- the opportunity to meet new people
- the chance for awards and scholarships

- improvement as performers and speakers
- and ultimately standing out in the college admissions process

The program assists educators in teaching the Constitution of the United States. Educators who can help their students through this program include:

- Speech and Debate teachers—speaking, debating skills
- Social Studies teachers—increasing knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, while providing topical support to students
- Language Arts teachers—assigning the U.S. Constitution as part of a writing project
- Librarians—assisting students in improving research skills.
- Other teachers—adapting the program to their areas of emphasis.

Benefits to the school

- A learning tool for effective teaching of the U.S. Constitution
- Better educated students
- Students who may become more involved in student government
- Students who are more likely to be community leaders
- Students who may be more involved and productive in the community
- Students with a better understanding of the U.S. Constitution
- A way for the school to be represented at the prestigious national contest sponsored by the National Speech and Debate Association

Benefits to the student

- In-depth learning the U.S. Constitution
- Improved research and planning ability
- Better able to speak publicly
- Sharper communication skills
- Improved profile for college admissions
- More successful participate in local, state, and national government
- Enhanced involvement in school student government and other school activities
- In the end, a more productive life!

Scholarships

Nationally, more than \$3 million is awarded each year by the Legion's Oratorical contests.

The Department of Missouri awards the following medals and scholarships each year.

1. STATE FINALS:

1 st Place	Gold Medal	\$5,000.00
2 nd Place.	Silver Medal.	\$2,500.00
3 rd Place.	Bronze Medal.	\$2,250.00
4 th Place.	Bronze Medal.	\$2,000.00

i. Zone (four state semi-finals)

1 st Place.	Gold Medal
2 nd Place	Silver Medal

- 3rd Place Bronze Medal
- 4th Place Bronze Medal
- iii. Districts (16 state quarter-finals)
 - 1st Place Silver Medal
 - 2nd Place. Bronze Medal
- ii. County Contests . . . Brooch

In addition to these Legion medals and scholarships, Drury University awards the 1st and 2nd place Zone winners with a four-year renewable scholarship. (The amount varies from \$13,000 to \$16,000 each year and can even be increased.)

Some Districts and posts in Missouri award scholarships for participating at the high school, county, and district levels.

2. NATIONAL FINALS

- i. Fifty-five Department winners receive a scholarship of \$2,000 for participation in the first round (National quarter-finals).
- ii. Semi-finalists who participate in the second-round, but do not advance to the finals receive a second \$2,000 scholarship.
- iii. The three finalists in the National contest receive scholarships of:
 - 1. First Place: \$25,000 *plus* \$2,000 for Quarter Finals = \$27,000
 - 2. Second Place: \$22,500 *plus* \$2,000 Quarter Finals = \$24,500
 - 3. Third Place: \$20,000 *plus* \$2,000 Quarter Finals = \$24,000
- iv. All three finalists automatically qualify for the National Speech and Debate Association annual contest, typically in June each year.

The Legion's contest has two parts.

1. Prepared Oration:

- each contestant delivers a prepared oration that is original.
- The oration must address some aspect of the Constitution of the United States, which emphasizes the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The same oration will be used throughout all contest levels.
- The oration, except for the State Finals, must last between 5 and 6 minutes.
- The oration in the State Finals must last between 8 and 10 minutes.

2. Short speech on an Assigned Topic:

- Contestants in the district, zone and state contests will speak on one of four Assigned Topics from the contest rules, in addition to their prepared oration.
- The Assigned Topic tests the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of research, and the ability to relate the topic to the basic principles of the Constitution.
- All contestants speak on the same assigned topic, selected by drawing at each contest.
- The assigned topics—typically amendments to the Constitution—change each year.

Eligibility:

- All high school students in Missouri are eligible for this oratorical contest, including those at public schools, parochial schools, private schools of any kind, and home schools.

- Students must be:
 - citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States
 - bona fide students under age 20
 - enrolled in grades 9 through 12 in a high school or junior high school
 - Legally domiciled in or attend school within Missouri.
- Contestants may enter the contest in one state only.
- Students who graduate early may compete if they are not enrolled in a college, university, trade school or other institution of higher learning on February 27 of the year.
- Contestants may compete again as long as they are not one of the three finalists in a previous National Final contest.

Sponsorship:

- There are no entry fees at any level of this contest.
- Contests are sponsored and financed by the local American Legion Posts and The American Legion Department of Missouri.
- Posts sponsor and assist the contestants from their local high schools.
- If no Post is nearby or a contestant is not sponsored by a post, then the Department Oratorical Commission will assist the contestant.
- The contest is open to the public, with no admission charge.

Schedule of Contests

Contest	Certification Date
High School	Before November 30
County	Between December 5 and 13
District	Before January 24
Zone	Before February 14
State Finals	On Sunday, February _____

The National Contest is conducted in April of each year.

For questions about judging, here's an overview.

County and District contests have from three to five judges.

Zone and State contests have five judges.

All judges should be trained or experienced in public speaking and previously judged a speech contest.

Judges may judge a student only once each year.

Judges may not be associated with a school represented by a contestant.

Arrangements for judges are made by the chair of each contest.

The Chair of the contest will brief the judges before the contest.

Every judge at any of our speech competitions are encouraged to take our free judge training, which includes the basics of judging speech contests. Our judge training is the best way to build lasting change in the attitudes and actions of our community members who participate as judges in our program.

During the contest, judges are seated separately.

Judges are not allowed to converse/consult with anyone else during the contest.

A standardized scorecard is used by all judges.