**ORATORICAL PROGRAM S.O.P.**

*The Oratorical Program is a function of the American Legions’ “Americanism Pillar”. The Oratorical Program is a constitutional speech contest for high school students and it offers scholarships upwards of $18,000. The contest has a prepared oration and an assigned topic which is assigned the day of the contest. The prepared 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. 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.*

**Early April DEC meeting:**

The Oratorical Committee annual report is given to the DEC detailing the scholarship amounts awarded and specifics of the State Contest held in March. This report is usually drafted by the Committee Chair unless a request is made to Department personnel for assistance.

**Contest planning meeting with Oratorical Chair:**

This is generally held in early September. A ‘To Do’ task list and schedule for Department is drafted for various matters concerning the program that need addressed.

**Late September meeting:**

During the Committee meeting the DEC annual report is reviewed. Discussion of that years National Oratorical Contest and any involvement of the Committee members plus any newly proposed or passed Resolutions is held. A list of any District Chairmen informational changes is submitted, and any other pertinent business is addressed. Department staff is to attend, provide meeting agendas and any relevant paperwork to each Committee member, take minutes (if necessary), and facilitate any resources, information, or actions decided in the meeting. Any absent Committee member must be mailed or emailed meeting paperwork and minutes.

**Fall meeting in late October:**

A copy of the previous September meeting approved minutes is to be supplied along with any proposed or passed National/Dept. Resolutions along with a list of any District Chairmen informational changes. Discussion on District competition time/date/location and Committee involvement is held. Department staff is to attend, provide meeting agendas and any relevant paperwork to each Committee member, take minutes (if necessary), and facilitate any resources, information, or actions decided in the meeting. Any absent Committee member must be mailed or emailed meeting paperwork and minutes.

**Oratorical Prep:**

Emails to Contestants are sent out as District contestants are registered on Nationals database. These emails are sent periodically throughout the year and as requested, but the bulk of emails are sent November through February. This email contains dates/times/locations of each level of the contest; prospective contestant personal and school information for the District Chairman to give the District contest dates and locations; a 64-page guide for preparing for the contest; video links on how the contest is conducted; definition of the prepared speech; definition of assigned speech/assigned topics for the upcoming year’s contests. This email also provides a link to information about the contest on the National American Legion webpage <https://www.legion.org/oratorical> All this information can be regular mailed upon request.

**Mid-Winter conference Oratorical Committee Meeting:**

The Mid-Winter conference meeting is held around the end of January. State Contest volunteers, budget, and other various matters are discussed. A meeting agenda is to be supplied along with the most current list of Judges recruited for the State contest, sample Judge invitation letter, and drop sheet version of Judge instructions. Chairmen contact information is given out and a list of any District Chairmen/Committee member informational changes are noted. Also, the most updated list of contestant information that are registered and organized by District is needed for each District Chairman. The most updated list of State contest staff and their assignments, a copy of the October meeting approved minutes, and the most recent version of District contest dates/times/locations are to be supplied as well. Department staff is to attend, provide any relevant paperwork to each Committee member, take minutes (if necessary), and facilitate any resources, information, or actions decided in the meeting. Any absent Committee member must be mailed or emailed meeting paperwork and minutes.

**Ordering of Awards:**

This is usually done after Mid-Winter conference. Going by past participation, generally 12 District Winner and State Winner + State Runner up contest plaques as well as 12 mini flag sets are ordered from Schultz & Ey – or whatever cost-effective vendor is being used at the time for Department.

**State Competitor/District Winner Packet:**

This mailing can be done by mail or email depending on the contestant’s preference. This is done when each District competition has been completed and a winner announced from late January to early March. This mailing contains the District Winner form; District Winner Biography; a confirmation and instructional letter to District Winners on the State contest date/time/location and how many people will attend with them; a certificate of original effort form; a cover sheet form which a hardcopy of their speech is to be accompanied with; a media consent release from; a waiver of claim form – all to be filled out and returned before the State competition to serve as critical information to register for the National competition, liability waivers, and official State contest registration. Accompanying this mailing will be a map and layout of the State contest rooms and list of hotels and restaurants.

**Judges Confirmation Packet:**

This mailing is done when a judge has confirmed their participation in the State Contest. This is usually confirmed by email or phone or when a potential judge returns their invitation letter whether by regular mail or email or through a District Chairman. This mailing contains – A tailor-made thank you letter specific to the judge, a copy off the current years assigned constitutional topics that the students will speak on; a letter explaining the contest and a guide how the student’s prepared orations are constructed; a drop sheet of the judges instructions; a sample scorecard and scratch tally sheet (assigned and prepared speeches) to familiarize themselves with before the contest; and a copy of the entire judges briefing of 42 pages constructed by National explaining the whole Oratorical program.

**State Contest:**

This is generally held at Department in mid-March beginning at 10am. Students, parents, coaches, judges, committeemen, and volunteer staff being arriving at 9am. There is a checklist for the contest to ensure every aspect of the contest has the resources it needs. An up to date list of participating Judges and contestants is to be posted. Financial award letters need to be drafted with current District contestant name and placed into envelopes with their names printed – This must be signed by the Americanism and Children & Youth Coordinator. Room signs need to be posted, and large easel with room layout needs to be placed by the front entrance. There is a morning briefing, two semi-final speech rounds (A&B) that consists of two speeches per contestant, one prepared speech and one assigned speech from the yearly, nationally appointed constitutional amendments topics selected. A blind draw sheet is needed to determine what District winning contestants go in either round A or B and their order of speech delivery. There is a holding room for when students have finished their speeches or are waiting to present – an instruction sheet must be provided to the staff monitor. There is a break for lunch (whether provided or students leave for lunch) A judge/staff provided lunch which needs to be planned for about 30 people, and then the afternoon Finals session after two contestants have been chosen from all participating Districts. There are two assigned topics prep room designated for the two finalists who are given minutes to prepare their randomly selected assigned constitutional topic which also serves as another holding room while the other student is presenting their speech. There is a judge’s room for which they can calculate their scorecards and present to the tabulators these rooms need to be supplied with pencils and sharpener as well. Forms, scorecards, instructions, etc. are prepared specifically for every staff member and judge. These are provided on clipboards and consist of the information in the following table:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Chairman forms for semi-final A** | **Chairman forms for semi-final B** | **Chairman forms for final round** | **Judges forms a.m. (10 sets)** | **Judges forms p.m. (5 sets)** | **Tabulator forms for semi-final A, B and Finals (4 sets)** | **Timekeeper forms for semi-final A, B and Finals (4 sets)** |
| Instruction sheet | Instruction sheet | 2-contestant information sheets | Judges instructions | Judges instructions | Tabulator Instructions | Timekeeper Instructions |
| Winner of group A | Winner of group B | 2-copies of assigned topics | Assigned topics | Differently colored scorecard (2) | Tabulation scorecards (2) | Timekeeper record cards (2) |
| Random draw sheet A | Random draw sheet B | Random draw sheet | Differently colored scorecard (2) | Tally sheet for assigned topic (2) | 3-4-5-way tiebreaker sample instructions | Remaining speech time flash cards (3,4,5,8,9,10) |
| Contestant info sheets | Contestant info sheets |  | Tally sheet for assigned topic (max.7) | Tally sheet for prepared topic (2) |  |  |
| 2-copies of assigned topics | 2-copies of assigned topics |  | Tally sheet for prepared topic (max.7) |  |  |  |

After the Judge’s scores are recorded and tabulations are completed an awards ceremony is held in the library with plaques and flag sets given to the winner and runner-up. Financial award letters need to be drafted and then presented to the Winner and Runner-Up sealed in named envelopes – This must be signed by the Americanism and Children & Youth Coordinator. Time for fellowship, appreciation, pictures, and recognition is held before the end of the Contest day and dismissal.

**Post State Contest Duties:**

Around mid to late March Judge Certificates of Appreciation are mailed to any judges that did not receive their certificate during the Contest. The State Contest winner must be registered for the National Oratorical competition. This is done on their website using credentials to access the registration form usually emailed to the Committee Chair or to Department. A check request form must be filled out with each District Contestant Winner and State Winner + Runner-Up’s information so that they can receive their scholarship amount allotment from the Legion and SAL contributions – This must be signed by the Americanism and Children & Youth Coordinator and then submitted to the Fiscal officer. Updates on the Oratorical page must be done on the website with current information and media. Also, any requested National Contest volunteer and pairing bracket information must be forwarded to Committee members or other interested parties.