

THE AMERICAN LEGION | ORATORICAL PROGRAM



High School Oratorical Scholarship Program

A Constitutional Speech Contest

THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF OHIO





GENERAL INFORMATION

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 \$25,000. 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.

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.

The American Legion, Department of Ohio, during this school year, again sponsors an Oratorical Contest for high school students in Ohio. The purpose of the contest is to develop knowledge and appreciation of the United States Constitution, the ability to think and speak clearly and critically, and the acceptance of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship. The contest meets guidelines of the Ohio High School Activities Association. The Legion contest is a partner with the National Speech & Debate Association, the honor society for high school students (formerly the National Forensic League).



AWARDS

The Department of Ohio awards the following medals and scholarships at State Finals:

DEPARTMENT:

1st Place	Gold Medal	\$2,500.00
2nd Place	Silver Medal	\$1,500.00
Remainder	Divided	\$2,500.00

DISTRICT:

1st Place	Silver Medal
2nd Place	Bronze Medal
Participants	Pin

PREPARED ORATION

Each contestant shall deliver a prepared oration, which must be an original effort. Plagiarism may cause disqualification. 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. A student shall use the same subject for the oration throughout all contests.

The oration in all contests, must last between eight and ten minutes. The same oration must be used by the state winner in the national contest. The orations need to go to the contest chair prior to the speech. The title of the oration is announced by the contest Chair before each oration.

Quotations must be clearly indicated. If quotations exceed ten words, the author’s name shall be given both orally and in the manuscript. All speeches are delivered in English (except for short phrases from other languages). Singing is not permitted (although songs may be quoted).

ASSIGNED TOPIC DISCOURSE

Contestants in the district, county, and state contests give an Assigned Topic Discourse, in addition to a Prepared Oration. The discourse lasts between three and five minutes. The oration quotation rule must be observed. The discourse 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 topic, drawn during the contest from the four listed in the section “Assigned Topics” below.

DELIVERY TIME:

<u>Prepared Oration</u>		<u>Assigned Topic</u>	
Not Less / Not More Than	Not Less / Not More Than	Not Less / Not More Than	Not Less / Not More Than
8min	10min	3min	5min

**School, County District & State Finals*

If a contestant uses less than the minimum or more than the maximum time, a penalty of one point for each minute (or fraction thereof) is deducted from the contestant’s total score.

ELIGIBILITY

All contestants shall be citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States, bona fide students under age 20, and presently enrolled in grades 9 through 12, in a Ohio high school or junior high school (public, parochial, military, home or private).

Contestants must either be legally domiciled in, or attend school within, Ohio. Contestants may enter the contest in only one state. Students who graduate early may compete if not enrolled in a college, university, trade school, or other institution of higher learning in February 2024. The three finalists in the National Finals cannot compete again at any level.

SPONSORSHIP

Contests are sponsored and financed by The American Legion Department of Ohio, and the Legion Posts throughout the State. Posts sponsor and assist the contestants from their local high schools. If no Post is near a high school, or if a contestant is not sponsored by a Post, then the Commission, upon request, will assist the contestant. Posts of each county unite to sponsor the county champion at the district contest. Posts in each district sponsor the district winner at the Department contest.

Contests are open to the public, with no admission charge. Schools and the public, generally, are invited to cooperate with the Legion in promoting this patriotic enterprise. Constructive criticisms and suggestions



are considered by the Commission at its annual meeting.

Assigned Topics for 2024 Oratorical Contest

Amendment II

A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment XXIII

The District constituting the seat of Government of the United States shall appoint in such manner as the Congress may direct:

A number of electors of President and Vice President equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives in Congress to which the District would be entitled if it were a State, but in no event more than the least populous State; they shall be in addition to those appointed by the State, but they shall be considered, for the purposes of the election of President and Vice President, to be electors appointed by a State; and they shall meet in the District and perform such duties as provided by the twelfth article of amendment.

Amendment XXV, Section 3

Whenever the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.

Amendment V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a grand jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the militia, when in actual service in time of war or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, not be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.





JUDGES & TABULATORS

The judges are an 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 a national champion.

All department finals and the national contest must use five judges. No publicity shall be given to the names of the judges in advance of the contest. During the contest, the judges will be seated in different locations in the auditorium and each judge shall render his or her final decision without consultation with other judges or any other person.

Judges will be advised that a lack of emphasis in the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse on the duties and obligations of a citizen must result in their downgrading the contestant. Judges are permitted to downgrade a contestant up to a maximum of 10 points for failure to speak about the Constitution. The contest chairman 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 the contest chairman, following the last assigned topic discourse, may proceed to a private room for final review and tabulation. The decision of the judges is final.

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



National finals contest

- The national finals contest will be held in Hillsdale, Mich., at Hillsdale College on May 17-19, 2024.
- Quarterfinal and semifinal rounds are scheduled to be held on Saturday, May 18. The championship finals is scheduled for Sunday, May 19.
- All contestants and chaperones will arrive on Friday, May 17. All contestants and chaperones will stay on campus at Hillsdale College.
- A mandatory pre-contest orientation session for all contestants will take place the Friday evening of the contest weekend. A banquet honoring all contestants will be Sunday afternoon, following the national championship contest.
- What to wear - Uniforms are not permitted. Appropriate business attire is required by all contestants. Contestants are not permitted to wear awards and medals from previous competition.
- All contestants and chaperones will depart for home after the banquet on Sunday.



POINTS OF CONTACT

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Chair Oratorical Commission

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American Legion Internet Websites

National American Legion Headquarters:
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Ohio American Legion Headquarters:
www.ohiolegion.com/oratorical/

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