



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 on March 29th, 2026, again sponsors an Oratorical Contest for high school students throughout 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	\$4,000.00
2nd Place	Silver Medal	\$2,000.00
Remainder	Divided	\$3,000.00

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 27, 2026. 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 Committee, 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 Committee during its bi-annual meetings.

Assigned Topics for 2026 Oratorical Contest

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 4. 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.





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 15-17, 2026.
- Quarterfinal and semifinal rounds are scheduled to be held on Saturday, May 16. The championship finals is scheduled for Sunday, May 17.
- All contestants and chaperones will arrive on Friday, May 15. 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

John Looker

Oratorical Co-Chairman

(513) 290-4511

jclooker1@gmail.com



Gary A Minadeo

Oratorical Co-Chairman

(440) 840-6164

garyaminadeo@gmail.com



Christie White

Americanism and Children and Youth Coordinator

60 Big Run Rd Delaware, OH 43015

(740) 362-7478

programs@ohiolegion.com



THE AMERICAN LEGION | ORATORICAL PROGRAM



Please contact the Department Americanism Office for additional materials, information, and other assistance:

The American Legion, Department of Ohio
ATTN: Americanism Office
P.O. Box 8007
Delaware, OH 43015

Telephone: 740-362-7478

E-mail: programs@ohiolegion.com

American Legion Websites

National American Legion Headquarters:
www.legion.org

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

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