

## High School Oratorical Scholarship Program

### “A Constitutional Speech Contest”

#### **General Information**

The purpose of The American Legion's National High School Oratorical Scholarship Program “A Constitutional Speech Contest” is to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States on the part of high school students. Other objectives of the contest include the development of leadership qualities, the ability to think and speak clearly and intelligently, and the preparation for acceptance of the duties and responsibilities, the rights and privileges of American citizenship.

#### **Scholarships**

Scholarship awards are presented to the three finalists in the Final Round of the National contest as follows: **1st place -- \$18,000; 2nd place -- \$16,000; 3rd place -- \$14,000.** Each Department (State) winner who is certified into and participates in the first round of the National Contest will receive a **\$1,500 scholarship.** Each first round winner who advances to and participates in the second round, but does not advance to the Final Round, will receive an additional **\$1,500** scholarship to pursue education beyond high school.

The scholarships awarded by the National Organization of The American Legion to the three finalists, to the Department winners, and to the first round winners who are eliminated during the second round of competition may be used to attend any college or university in the United States. Funds for the scholarships awarded by the National Organization are provided by The American Legion Insurance Committee.

In addition to the scholarships award by the National Organization, there are several hundred scholarships awarded at the discretion of the intermediate organizations, to participants at Post, District or County, and Department levels of competition.

#### **Department Contests**

Arrangements for contests leading to the Department Finals shall be the responsibility of each Department (State) organization of The American Legion. **For those levels of competition prior to the Department Finals, the rules and regulations to follow are not mandatory; they are offered as a guideline. However, all Department Finals Contests shall conform to National Contest procedures, rules and regulations.**

A winner certified to the National Americanism and Children & Youth Division of The American Legion by a Department which did not conduct its final competition in conformity with the rules and regulations as set forth therein may, in the judgment of the Director, Americanism and Children & Youth Division, or his representative, be disqualified from competition in the National Contest.

Each Department may certify one (1) contestant into the National Contest. If for any reason the Department Winner is unable to compete in the National Contest, the

Department First runner-up may be substituted following approval by The American Legion's National Americanism Commission. A Department First runner-up accepted into National Competition will be entitled to all National awards, entitlements and compensation that the Department Winner would have received had he/she participated at that level.

Department contest winners **MUST BE** certified to the National Americanism and Children & Youth Division, The American Legion National Headquarters, PO Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, **NO LATER THAN MARCH \***, 2010. Failure to meet this deadline could result in disqualification of the contestant.

### **Eligibility**

Eligible participants in the contest shall 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 twenty (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) in which the curriculum of said high school is considered to be of high school level, commencing with grade nine (9) and terminating with grade twelve (12). Students must be enrolled in high school or junior high school during the time of participation at any level of the contest.

The three finalists of the National Contest will be ineligible for further participation at any level.

### **The Prepared Oration**

The Prepared Oration must be on some aspect of the Constitution of the United States with emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. The same subject and oration used in the Department Contest **must be** used in the National Contest.

In the Prepared Oration, as well as in the Assigned Topic Discourse, quotations must be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than ten words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally.

The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant and must not take up less than eight (8) minutes or more than ten (10) minutes for delivery. It must be delivered in the English language. The singing of a song(s) is not permitted and will result in the immediate disqualification of the contestant. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song provided proper attribution is made.

Contestants may have in their possession a copy of their Prepared Oration in the first holding room. They may consult the copy of their prepared oration, until they exit the holding room in order to begin the contest, at which time the copy of the prepared

oration will be surrendered to the contest official who is monitoring the first holding room.

### **Assigned Topic**

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/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 Constitution of the United States, selected from Articles and Sections as listed under assigned topics for the current year's contest.

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

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

It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases of a foreign language into the prepared oration and/or assigned topic in order to develop the argument, establish a point, etc. It is to be understood that the vast majority of the prepared oration and/or assigned topic must still be delivered in the English language.

### **Assigned Topics for 2009-2010**

#### **Article 4 Section 3 Para 1**

New states may be admitted by the Congress into this Union, but no new State shall be formed or erected within the jurisdiction of any other state; not any state be formed by the junction of two or more states, or parts of states, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.

#### **Article 5**

The Congress, whenever two-thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the application of the Legislatures of two-thirds of the several states, shall call a convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three-fourths thereof, as the one or the other mode of ratification may be proposed by the Congress; provided that no State, without its consent, shall be deprived of its equal suffrage in the Senate.

## Amendment 5

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 twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

## Amendment 6

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

## Contest Regulations

A drawing shall be held by the official in charge of the contest to determine the order in which the contestants will appear. The contest chairman shall announce the title of the contestant's prepared oration immediately after introducing him/her as Contestant No. 1, Contestant No. 2, etc. The chairman will request the audience to refrain from applause until the Judges have made their decision.

A raised platform is not compulsory; however, it is strongly recommended. **The use of notes, amplification, lectern or speaker's stand by contestants or prompting in any manner is NOT permitted. Props are NOT permitted.**

The use of any type of electronic/digital data gathering, receiving and/or transmitting equipment in any form by contestants or members of the audience is prohibited.

The time allotted for each contestant to deliver their Prepared Oration shall not be less than eight (8) or more than ten (10) minutes and for the Assigned Topic, not less than three (3) or more than five (5) minutes.

An official timer shall be named by the Contest Chairman whose duty it shall be to keep an accurate time record of each contestant, and he shall be located on the main floor in full view of the contestants. **The timekeeper shall begin timing each contestant at the start of the Prepared Oration.** The timer should be equipped with a stopwatch and time cards for the Prepared Oration carrying the figures 8, 9 and 10. When eight minutes have been used, the time warning card with the figure 8 thereon shall be placed in full view of the speaker, following with 9 and 10 as the speaker progresses. The same procedure shall be used with cards bearing 3, 4 and 5 during the Assigned Topic Discourse. The Contest Chairman shall announce the time consumed by each

contestant for the Prepared Oration and the Assigned Topic immediately after each contestant speaks for the benefit of the Judges.

Contestants are required to remain in a private room where the discourse of the other speakers cannot be heard until it is their turn to speak (contestants will be under the supervision of an individual appointed by the Contest Chairman). As the contestants conclude their Prepared Orations, they must return to a soundproof waiting room. As each speaker concludes his or her Assigned Topic Discourse, they shall not be allowed to associate with contestants who have not fulfilled the Assigned Topic requirement.

Approximately five minutes prior to the time of the delivery of the Assigned Topic Discourse, Contestant No. 1 will be informed of the topic drawn for the Assigned Topic and shall be permitted to retire to privacy under the direction of an individual appointed by the Contest Chairman, whose duty it shall be to see that no contestant is permitted to consult any text matter or notes having any connection with the subject matter upon which he/she is to speak, other than the actual words of the topic provided on the card drawn.

Each succeeding contestant will be called upon in the order in which he/she previously appeared. He/she shall also, in turn, be informed of the topic of the Assigned Topic Discourse and shall then be escorted to privacy in the manner as provided for Contestant No. 1.

It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases of a foreign language into the Prepared Oration and/or Assigned Topic in order to develop the argument, establish a point, etc. It is to be understood that the vast majority of the Prepared Oration and/or Assigned Topic must still be delivered in the English language.

A contestant must give both their Prepared Oration and the Assigned Topic Discourse in order to receive the scholarship moneys they are entitled to.

### **Travel Expenses**

The National Organization of The American Legion will pay the travel and lodging expenses of Department Winners and their chaperones to the National Contest. **All contestants must be accompanied by a chaperone over 21 years of age.**

The National Organization of The American Legion will 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 certified into the National competition. Contestants will travel by an air carrier selected by The American Legion.

### **TV 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) the lighting and other site conditions are the same for all contestants; 2) the taping or broadcasts shall in no way

distract the contestants or interfere with the preannounced scheduled time of the contest; 3) the normal speaking voice of the contestant is not interfered with or amplified within the auditorium; and 4) The American Legion is in no way financially obligated without its prior approval.

### **Judges**

The judges are a very 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 utilize 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 attendant duties and obligations of a citizen must result in their downgrading the contestant involved. Judges are permitted to downgrade a contestant up to a maximum of ten (10) points for failure to speak on 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.**

### **Tabulators**

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 Information**

The National Finals Contest will be conducted, April 9-11, 2010, at the Indiana University Place Conference Center & Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana. Quarter-Final and Semi-Final Contests will be held Saturday, April 10. Championship Contest will be held Sunday, April 11.

All contestants and chaperones will arrive Friday, April 9. All contestants and chaperones will be lodged at the University Place Conference Center Hotel, 850 West Michigan Road, Indianapolis, IN 46202.

A mandatory pre-contest orientation session for all contestants will be held Friday evening, April 9.

A banquet honoring all contestants will be held Sunday afternoon, April 11.

All contestants and chaperones will depart for home late Sunday afternoon, April 11.

**For More Information**

Individuals interested in learning more about the National High School Oratorical Contest should contact the following: The American Legion: Department of South Dakota, PO Box 67, Watertown, South Dakota 57201, 605-886-3604.