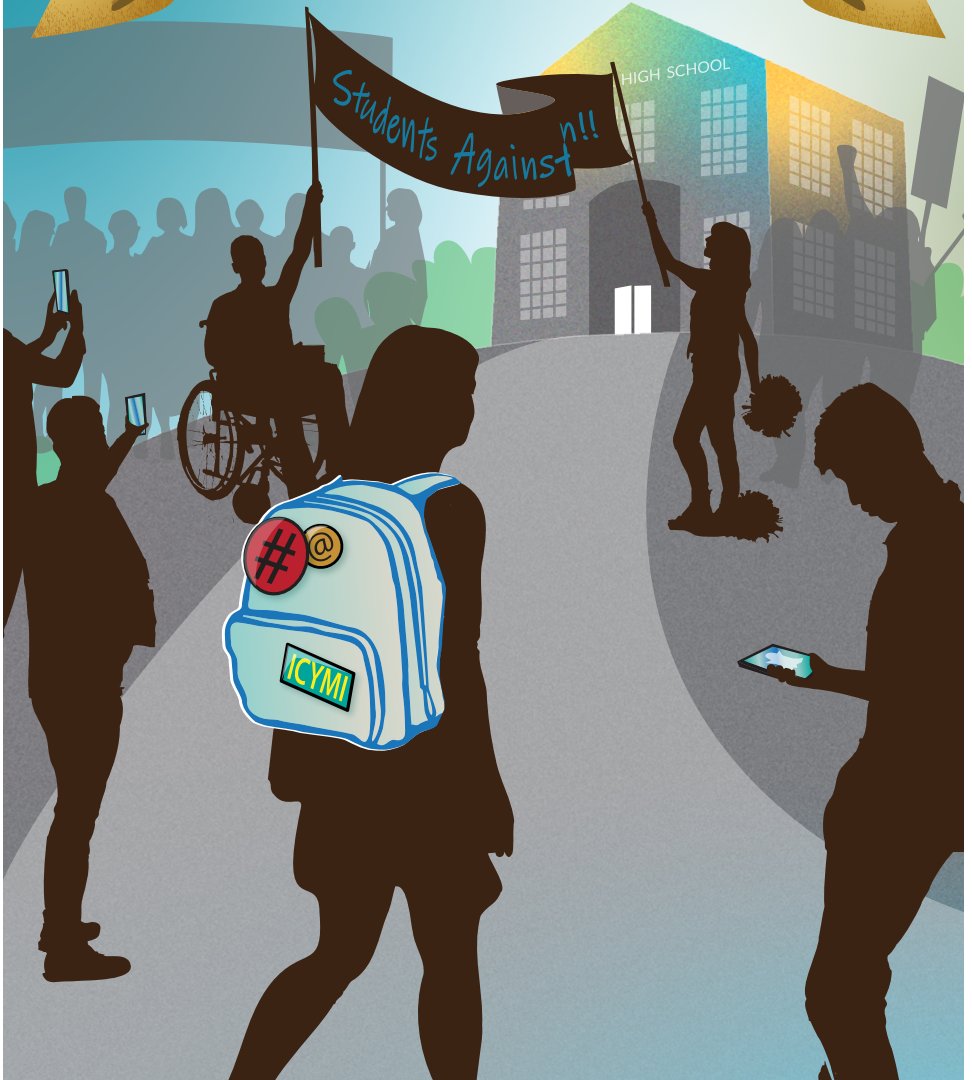


NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST

*The First Amendment and the Schoolhouse Gate:
Students' Free Speech Rights*



2022 CONTEST WINNERS

THE NINTH CIRCUIT'S PUBLIC INFORMATION AND
COMMUNITY OUTREACH (PICO) COMMITTEE THANKS
THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR SUPPORT:

U.S. COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT

U.S. DISTRICT COURT, DISTRICT OF ALASKA

U.S. DISTRICT COURT, DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

U.S. DISTRICT COURT AND U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT,
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

U.S. DISTRICT COURT AND U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT,
EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

U.S. DISTRICT COURT, NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

U.S. DISTRICT COURT, SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

DISTRICT COURT OF GUAM

U.S. DISTRICT COURT, DISTRICT OF HAWAII

U.S. DISTRICT COURT AND U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT,
DISTRICT OF IDAHO

U.S. DISTRICT COURT AND U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT,
DISTRICT OF MONTANA

U.S. DISTRICT COURT, DISTRICT OF NEVADA

U.S. DISTRICT COURT, DISTRICT OF NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

U.S. DISTRICT COURT AND U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT,
DISTRICT OF OREGON

U.S. DISTRICT COURT AND U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT,
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

U.S. DISTRICT COURT, WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

PRIZE MONEY AND OTHER CONTEST COSTS ARE FUNDED THROUGH ATTORNEY
ADMISSION FEES COLLECTED BY THE COURTS TO FUND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
FOR THE BAR AND COMMUNITY.

A Word About the Contest

The 2022 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest is a circuit-wide essay and video competition for high school students sponsored by the Ninth Circuit's Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) committee and the 15 judicial districts that make up the Ninth Circuit. Now in its seventh year as a circuit-wide contest, the annual contest gives students the opportunity to express themselves through creative writing or video production while learning about the constitution, landmark rulings, history, the federal courts and their communities.

The theme of the 2022 contest, "**The First Amendment and the Schoolhouse Gate: Students' Free Speech Rights,**" challenged students to address "**What are students' free speech rights – and responsibilities – on and off campus?**" Participants were asked to consider what rights the First Amendment provides to students engaging in free speech – both inside and outside of school. Participants were also asked to consider the responsibilities, if any, that students, schools or the government have with respect to speech by students, including whether it may cause harm to others.

Of the 800 essay entries and 112 video entries, 42 essays and 29 videos from the local district contests advanced to the circuit level. The field narrowed down even more to 12 essays and 10 videos that were selected for final consideration by the PICO Committee members composed of judges, court executives, attorneys and staff, who planned and organized the contest. Students from Alaska, Central California, Northern California, Southern California, Montana and Washington were the final winners.

<https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>

The contest was open to high school students in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington state, along with the United States Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

We thank the many dedicated volunteers who made it possible for this competition to be a success. We also thank the teachers and educators for encouraging their students to participate and to all the students who participated, we hope that you learned a bit more about the role of the federal courts in our American democracy.

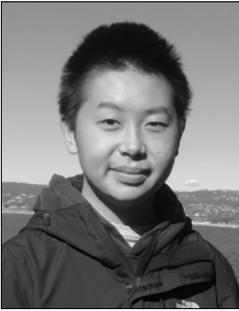
PICO Committee

July 2022

WINNING ESSAY CONTEST ENTRIES

1st
place

KEVIN GUO NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA



Kevin Guo is a rising senior at Cupertino High School in Cupertino, California, where he is an active participant in both student government and the school's mock trial team. As a self-described "huge law nerd," Kevin enjoys constantly learning more about law and the legal profession—resulting in him reading judicial opinions, lurking on #AppellateTwitter and taking dual-enrollment law courses in his spare time. He plans to major in political science and ultimately go to law school, where he aspires to further his

interest in law. Afterward, Kevin hopes to work in appellate law, though his eventual goal is to pursue a career on the bench.

A Balancing Test: Students, Speech, and Schools

"If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein."

– *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 642 (1943).

In American jurisprudence, the right of citizens to freely express their thoughts has been described as a "fixed star in our constitutional constellation,"¹ "a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment,"² and one of "our Nation's proudest boasts."³ Indeed, the right to speak freely is a quintessential American trait—but it would not be possible without the First Amendment.

Ratified in 1791, the First Amendment gives us the right to speak our minds by prohibiting government officials from "abridging the freedom of speech."⁴ Over time, the Supreme Court has extended

such protections to students, holding that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”⁵ However, while the First Amendment protects against even the most “offensive or disagreeable”⁶ types of speech, the Supreme Court has hesitated at extending the same protections to inside the schoolhouse gate. As a result, one major question still underlies the First Amendment today—one with increasing relevance, especially in today’s age of social media: just when may schools punish students for such speech—and what, if any, responsibilities do students have when speaking?

Ultimately, as what’s past is indeed prologue, one must look to the past to understand the present. In 1942, the West Virginia State Board of Education adopted a resolution making flag salutes “a regular part of the program of activities in the public schools” and ordered that a “refusal to salute the Flag be regarded as an act of insubordination [that] shall be dealt with accordingly.”⁷ Marie and Gathie Barnett, however, refused to salute the flag—and were expelled from school as a result. Their cases were brought before the Supreme Court, and in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*⁸, the Supreme Court upheld the applicability of the First Amendment to public schools. *Barnette* was a watershed moment for the First Amendment rights of students: it overruled *Minersville School District v. Gobitis*⁹—a case decided just three years prior—and reaffirmed the basic proposition that the First Amendment prohibited government actors, including school officials, from “force[ing] citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.”¹⁰

Twenty-six years later, after finding out that students intended to wear black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam War, the Des Moines Independent School District implemented a policy prohibiting armbands in school and suspended anyone who did not comply. John and Mary Tinker, along with Christopher Eckhardt, however, continued to wear a black armband to school and were suspended as a result. The case was eventually brought before the Supreme Court, which took the opportunity in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* to expound upon its holding in *Barnette*—holding that students do not “shed their constitutional

rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”¹¹ More importantly, however, the Court in *Tinker* established the “substantial disruption” test, and held that schools may only regulate on-campus student speech that “materially and substantially disrupt[s] the work and discipline of the school.”¹²

More recently, B.L., a student at Mahanoy Area High School, was suspended from the cheerleading team at her school for a year after she posted a profanity-laced message on her Snapchat story. B.L., represented by her parents, filed suit—and won in both the district court and the Third Circuit. In January 2021, the Supreme Court agreed to review the case, ultimately ruling in B.L.’s favor through the use of a multi-factor balancing test in *Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L.*¹³ In holding that the school’s actions were a violation of B.L.’s First Amendment rights, the Court noted that though “[i]t might be tempting to dismiss B. L.’s words as unworthy of the robust First Amendment protections discussed herein,” it is sometimes “necessary to protect the superfluous in order to preserve the necessary.”¹⁴

However, the Supreme Court’s decision in *Mahanoy* arguably raised more questions than answers, especially when it came to the distinction between on and off-campus speech. Indeed, in the post-COVID world, would a social media post made at home be considered on-campus speech, as Justice Thomas suggests?¹⁵ Or would it be considered off-campus speech, as the *Mahanoy* majority presumes?¹⁶ And though the Supreme Court has hinted towards stronger protections for off-campus speech, the Court has not specified precisely where these protections stop—and to what degree they stop at. As the Supreme Court put it, “We leave for future cases to decide where, when, and how these features mean the speaker’s off-campus location will make the critical difference.”¹⁷

Regardless of the ultimate answers to these questions, however, it is undisputed that, as students, we must speak peaceably, respectfully, and appropriately. Indeed, the Supreme Court has acknowledged this fact repeatedly in both *Bethel School Dist. No. 403 v. Fraser*¹⁸ and in *Morse v. Frederick*.¹⁹ In these cases, the Supreme Court held

that the First Amendment protects against neither “lewd, indecent, or offensive”²⁰ on-campus student speech nor “speech that . . . encourag[es] illegal drug use.”²¹ Notably, the Supreme Court did not apply *Tinker*’s substantial disruption test in either of these cases—and instead based its analysis on the speech’s content, rather than its effect.

Nonetheless, as evidenced by *Mahanoy*, these restrictions only technically apply to on-campus speech, as students enjoy greater when autonomy when speaking off-campus. Just because we can do something, however, does not mean we should. As students—and indeed, as fellow citizens—we all have a responsibility to speak with civility, and not with contempt: for “[t]olerance is a two-way street,”²² and we should all stay in our respective lanes.

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¹ *West Virginia Bd. of Ed. v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624, 642 (1943).

² *Texas v. Johnson*, 491 U.S. 397, 414 (1989).

³ *DR. A v. Hochuli*, 142 S. Ct. 552, 557 (2021) (Gorsuch, J., dissenting).

⁴ U.S. Const. amend. I.

⁵ *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 506 (1969).

⁶ *Johnson*, 491 U.S. at 414.

⁷ *Barnette*, 319 U.S. at 626 (1943).

⁸ Fun fact: Though the correct name spelling is “Barnett,” a clerk at the Court misspelled their names when filing the papers—hence the now-iconic “Barnette.”

⁹ 310 U.S. 586 (1940).

¹⁰ *Barnette*, 319 U.S. at 642.

¹¹ *Tinker*, 393 U.S. at 506.

¹² *Id.* at 513.

¹³ 141 S. Ct. 2038 (2021).

¹⁴ *Id.* at 2048.

¹⁵ *See id.* at 2063 (Thomas, J., dissenting) (“But where it is foreseeable and likely that speech will travel onto campus, a school has a stronger claim to treating the speech as

on-campus speech.”).

¹⁶ See *id.* at 2047 (“Consider too when, where, and how B. L. spoke. Her posts appeared outside of school hours from a location outside the school.”).

¹⁷ *Id.* at 2046.

¹⁸ 478 U.S. 675 (1986).

¹⁹ 551 U.S. 393 (2007).

²⁰ *Fraser*, 478 U.S. at 683.

²¹ *Morse*, 551 U.S. at 397.

²² *Ward v. Polite*, 667 F.3d 727, 735 (6th Cir. 2012); see also Transcript of Oral Argument at 62, *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colo. Civil Rights Comm’n*, 138 S. Ct. 1719 (2018) (No. 16-111) (“[T]olerance is essential in a free society. And tolerance is most meaningful when it’s mutual.”) *by & through Levy*, 141 S. Ct. 2038, 2046 (2021).



Lillian Yang is a rising senior at West Anchorage High School in Anchorage, Alaska. She is extremely passionate about strengthening her youth community, focusing on restorative juvenile justice and adolescent mental health. Her experiences include being the president of Anchorage Youth Court and one of four youth advisors on adolescent public health to the State of Alaska. Lillian can also be found outside enjoying the long Alaskan sun, playing piano or reading travel blogs from around the world. In the future, she hopes to go to college to study psychology, statistics or political science.

The 21st Century Student and Our Democracy: We Need Discussion, Not Censorship

More than ever, public school students' rights to free speech encourage student voices to react to our rapidly changing world.

The First Amendment prohibits the federal government, and by way of the 14th Amendment, state and local governments, from “abridging the freedom of speech.”¹ Free speech is worth protecting: debating unpopular opinions facilitates creativity, honesty, and engagement in a responsive, well-informed democracy. The public school provides an interesting case for the application of free speech. Best described by Justice Stephen Breyer, “America’s public schools are the nurseries of democracy,” emphasizing the unique role schools have in protecting free speech while balancing a safe learning environment.² Simultaneously, in our increasingly digitized world, the distinction between the school environment and the public sphere has become increasingly blurred. Ultimately, on-campus students have a right to speech that does not disrupt the safe school environment, is not vulgar or lewd, and does not promote illegal drug use, while off-campus students

have a right to all speech except speech disruptive to school. Above all, students, and schools, on- and off-campus have a responsibility to reduce censorship and promote discussion to prevent further limitations on student speech rights and protect our democracy.

The on-campus student's right to free speech is explicitly dictated in the landmark case *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969), establishing the constitutional minimum for all student speech. In this case, several public high school students wore black armbands to silently protest the Vietnam War. The school subsequently suspended the students, fearing disruption. Determining this suppression of on-campus speech as unconstitutional, the Court wrote "neither students nor teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate"—affirming students' rights to free speech.³ Importantly, the Court established that only when student expression "materially and substantially interferes" with the school's functions or impinges on other students' rights may school officials prohibit speech otherwise protected by the First Amendment.⁴ *Tinker* recognizes the importance of students' speech in school and ensures their rights to popular and unpopular opinions as long as the learning environment is not disrupted.

Regrettably, the important protections *Tinker* provided have been reduced. The Supreme Court made two important exceptions limiting types of speech on-campus, starting with *Bethel Sch. Dist. No. 403 v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986) and vulgar and offensive language. While *Tinker* involved non-disruptive political speech, *Bethel* involved a student who was suspended for using sexual innuendos at a school assembly. In his majority opinion, Chief Justice Burger crucially distinguished vulgar and lewd speech from other protected speech by emphasizing its incompatibility with the "fundamental values of public school education."⁵ The school has an obligation to provide an appropriate education for all ages, but the decision also bolstered the use of censorship to protect the learning environment.

The second drastic exception to on-campus student speech inhibits students from "promot[ing] illegal drug use."⁶ In *Morse v. Frederick*, 551 U.S. 393 (2007), a high school student was disciplined for

holding a banner messaged, “BONG HiTS 4 JESUS,” at a school-sponsored event off-campus.⁷ The Court sided with the school. Chief Justice John Roberts emphasized in his majority opinion that pro-drug messages undermined the school’s responsibility to promote health and good citizenship; thus, the “special characteristics of the school environment” allow school authorities to censor such speech.⁸ Unfortunately, the case reaffirmed that students’ constitutional rights are not always the same as those of adults in public locations and extended the definition of on-campus to include school-sponsored events. The decision again expanded the use of censorship for student education.

As the digital age blurs the distinction between on-campus and off-campus, off-campus student speech also sadly faces a growing number of on-campus limitations, including *Tinker’s* limitations. Off-campus students do still generally have a right to speech that adults have under the First Amendment. In *Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist. v. B. L. by & through Levy*, 141 S. Ct. 2038, 2046 (2021), a student was suspended after failing to make a varsity cheerleading team and sent a Snapchat captioned “F**k school f**k softball f**k cheer f**k everything.”⁹ *Mahanoy* revealed schools do have limited authority to regulate off-campus speech; however, students still have a right to speech if protected under *Tinker*. The Court set three guidelines for online and off-campus student speech regulation: (1) schools will rarely act as a student’s parents or legal guardians; (2) Courts must be skeptical of schools’ efforts to regulate off-campus speech which could include all 24 hours; and (3) schools have an interest in protecting unpopular speech, especially off-campus speech.¹⁰ The three factors show schools can limit speech, especially in cases of severe bullying or harassment, but the “leeway the First Amendment grants to schools in light of their special characteristics is diminished.”¹¹ Although it remains unclear how the three exceptions to the *Tinker* test apply to off-campus speech, *Mahanoy* hints the future of limiting student speech will depend on how students exercise their speech rights.

In the “nurseries of democracy,” students, and schools, must prevent any further limitations on student speech while maintaining a safe school environment both on- and off-campus. Students have

the responsibility on- and off-campus to use our speech to create positive discussion, rather than using our rights to attack, offend, or threaten others. Positive discussion means respecting diverse viewpoints, debating the world around us, and advocating for what we believe. This also means that if schools disapprove of certain types of speech, they have a responsibility to turn towards discussion of why that type of speech is unacceptable rather than use disciplinary measures or eventually the court to censor students. Through this shift from censorship to discussion, students and schools can, without the court, responsibly protect free speech rights and build a stronger, more resilient democracy together.

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US Constitution. Amendment I. Amended 1791.

¹ US Constitution. Amendment I. Amended 1791.

² *Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist. v. B. L. by & through Levy*, 141 S. Ct. 2038, 2046 (2021)

³ *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969)

⁴ *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969)

⁵ *Bethel Sch. Dist. No. 403 v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986)

⁶ *Morse v. Frederick*, 551 U.S. 393 (2007)

⁷ *Morse v. Frederick*, 551 U.S. 393 (2007)

⁸ *Morse v. Frederick*, 551 U.S. 393 (2007)

⁹ *Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist. v. B. L. by & through Levy*, 141 S. Ct. 2038, 2046 (2021)

¹⁰ *Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist. v. B. L. by & through Levy*, 141 S. Ct. 2038, 2046 (2021)

¹¹ *Mahanoy Area Sch. Dist. v. B. L.*



Sophia Rey is a rising senior at Sehome High School in Bellingham, Washington. After high school, she hopes to study political science or literature. Understanding the law, and writing and translating that knowledge into activism in her local community has been one of Sophia's greatest joys and passions. In the beautiful Pacific Northwest, she enjoys mountain biking and running with Galbraith Track Club. At Sehome, Sophia co-founded the Young Multiracial Society and is involved with the Diversity In Action Club and Teen Court. Sophia aims to attend law school to be able to legally fight the various forms of discrimination that Latinos and people of color face. As a first generation Venezuelan-Colombian American, her focus will always be on her culture and people in her work and life.

Student Free Speech Rights and Responsibilities

From our youngest proclamations in the playground to our well-researched debates in our civics classrooms; student discussion is arguably the most valuable piece of our education. Long after we have forgotten the faces of our peers, their words—our conversations—remain. The moment we hear the words: *I disagree*, is the moment we begin to examine our own beliefs, question our preconceptions, and seek resolution with others. At no other point are these interactions more important than in our youngest and most formative years. America's schools are a microcosm of America itself, and its students are not silent. Time and again, high schoolers have rallied against the evils of their world, protesting gun violence, discrimination, and injustice. Our nation's very fabric is knitted with the utmost protection of speech, distinguished as the most important freedom. The Founders of the Constitution viewed free speech as paramount; we need to be able to critique our government—our society—without facing censorship or

imprisonment.¹ However, like other civil liberties, the free speech clause of the First Amendment is bound in infinite tension with the protection of individual rights versus that of public safety. This is to say: at what point does the exercise of our liberty infringe on the rights of others? Throughout history, common law has shaped and interpreted this civil liberty and how it applies to students in the ever-changing sphere of education.

The Supreme Court case of *Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969) was the first case that established an important test for determining when school officials are entitled to limit students' speech. The case begins with a group of teenagers who created, planned, and carried out a symbolic protest against the Vietnam war. The group wore black armbands with peace symbols, signifying their stance on the international conflict. When Des Moines District school officials were made aware of these plans, they created a policy that forbid such armbands in school and suspended students who refused to comply. The students, including thirteen-year-old Mary Beth Tinker, faced suspension, prompting them to sue.

In a seven to two decision, the Court ruled that the school district did violate the students' freedom of speech. The Court established that students retain their free speech protections at school and that school officials must provide evidence that the speech in question had the potential to or actually did "materially and substantially interfere" with the operation of the school.² The decision originated from a fifth circuit case that also contended with symbolic speech. In the case of *Burnside v. Byars* (1966), school officials banned anti-discrimination buttons at an all-Black high school.³ This resulted in the circuit court creating the substantial disruption test that was adopted by the *Tinker* verdict three years later. This test has become the foundation of nearly all student free speech cases ever since.

The following two landmark Supreme Court decisions involving student free speech occur within two years of one another and demonstrate increased deference to school officials. *Bethel School District v. Fraser* in 1986 and *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* in 1988 set narrower limitations on student expression.

In *Fraser*, a student speech advocating the election of a friend at an ASB assembly was filled with sexual innuendoes. The student faced suspension, and the Court sided with the school in the lawsuit that followed. The Court distinguished the speech from that of *Tinker's* political nature and ruled that the school was within its right to prohibit speech that included profanity and obscenity because it contradicted the “fundamental values of public-school education”⁴. In a similar manner, a school principal at Hazelwood East Highschool in Missouri prohibited the publication of two high school newspaper articles on pregnancy and divorce in the student paper. The Court found that the school was allowed to restrict the content of student speech if it was “reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns”⁵.

The Court also ruled in the infamous “Bong Hits for Jesus” case of *Morse v. Frederick* that student speech can be restricted on the grounds that can be reasonably viewed to promote illegal drug use.⁶ Most recently, in *Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L.*, the Supreme Court carefully found its place in the regulation of online and therefore off-campus speech that is ever more typical in the age of the internet. To avoid standing in *loco parenti* (in the place of a parent), the Court declined to regulate a cheerleader’s obscene Snapchat rant on her frustrations with school, as restricting non-materially disruptive off-campus speech marks a slippery slope of restricting *all* speech that a student makes throughout the day.⁷

Courts’ decisions exist to protect other students and their community when speech harms, disrupts, and contradicts socio-cultural standards. The cases that arrive on the docket are but the tip of the iceberg and are usually brought by affluent, white, and privileged students.⁸ In his publication “Psychological Harm and Free Speech on Campus”,⁹ Andrew Jason argues that as a society, we ought to move towards the recognition of speech’s ability to harm psychologically, with the same intensity as physical and material harm. Building on the substantial disruption test, courts should also recognize the power of psychological harm and incorporate that consideration in deciding free speech cases. It can be a privilege to disrupt, and we must not overlook those who

suffer internally or within private communities from speech that is hateful.

Most importantly though, is the mindset that students and educators must adopt in the classroom. Teachers should supply us not with what to think, but how to think, and how to interact constructively with others. While courts may set key precedents on student speech, the true model of student discourse comes from students themselves in their decisions on how to communicate within their academic and social lives. Real, lasting progress in our discussions, our schools, our democracy, comes not from the swinging of a gavel, a suspension, or reprimand, but the simple: *I respectfully disagree, your words were hurtful, and here's why.*

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¹ U.S. Const. amend. I

² *Tinker v. Des Moines Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969)

³ *Burnside v. Byars*, 363 F.2d 744 (5th Cir. 1966)

⁴ *Bethel Sch. Dist. v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675 (1986)

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WINNING VIDEO CONTEST ENTRIES

Winning video entries can be viewed by visiting the 2022 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest website: <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>



1st
place

SOFIA TRETIK, FRANCESCO COMUZZI AND ENRICO SCUPPA DISTRICT OF MONTANA



Sofia Tretiak is 17 years old. She is from Ukraine and last year won the scholarship of the Future Leader Exchange Program. The program has allowed her to study the whole academic year as an exchange student in Terry High School, Montana. Her American government teacher, Christina Ehinger, told her class about the Ninth Circuit Civics Contest. Sofia, along with two exchange students from Italy, Francesco Comuzzi and Enrico Scuppa, made their winning video together. Sofia thanks Mrs. Ehinger

for being an amazing teacher and for teaching her so much about the United States. In Ukraine, Sofia danced for 10 years in the Ukrainian Folk Ensemble. Sofia loves photography, video-editing, playing the guitar, working out and

reading books. She is not completely certain about her career or college plans, but she is looking at pursuing a degree in journalism at a college in the United States. In the future, she would like to live and work in Ukraine and make her contribution to the rebuilding of her country, and is hoping the Russian-Ukrainian war will end soon.



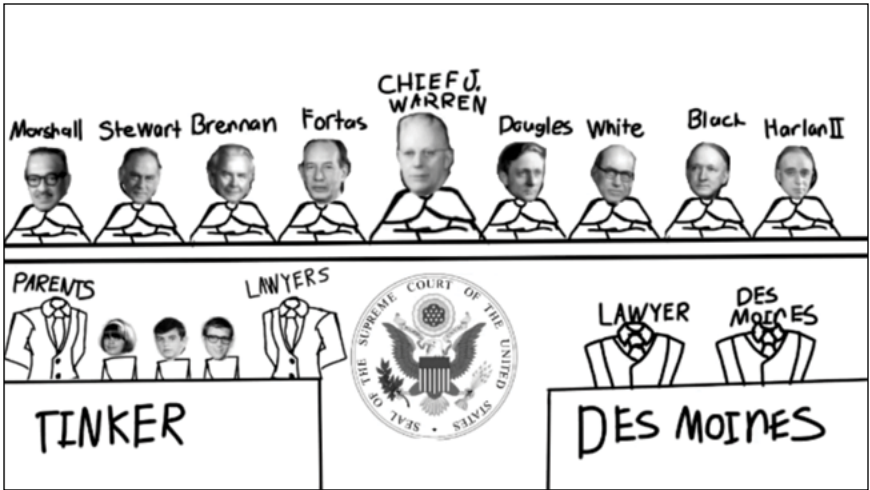
Francesco Comuzzi is 17 years old and left Italy last August to come to Montana for an exchange year. He has always liked and played sports; he started with basketball when he was 5 and after that, many other sports followed (soccer, tennis, swimming, football and rugby). Francesco considers himself as an ambitious person with whatever he does, he is always ready to compete and is not afraid of challenges that will make him push himself to give his best. He just graduated from high school here and will go back to

school in Italy next year to finish his last year there. He plans to study business and economics in college.



Enrico Scuppa is an exchange student from Italy and has been living in the United States for 10 months, in Terry, Montana, a town of 600. He enjoys his time in the U.S. and fell in love with the American culture and the people, but more than everything, Enrico loves the freedom that America exudes. This is the main reason he decided to study American government, its constitution and its laws. When he found out about the opportunity to delve into the topic of freedom of speech and make a video about

it, he decided to enter the civics contest with his fellow exchange students, now his friends and teammates. Now, he couldn't be prouder of himself, and his teammates, Francesco and Sofia. Enrico has always liked to study and discover new things and this curiosity pushes him every day to read a lot of books and watch documentaries about anything, resulting in multiple passions and hobbies, but his greatest passion is science. Enrico loves to study the universe, chemistry, physics, biology and everything related to science and math. He now wants to study aerospace engineering in college, but he has one more year of high school in Italy. After that, he would like to come back here to America to chase his dreams.



2nd
place

JESUS MONTES CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA



Jesus Montes is 17 years old and graduated recently from Rubidoux High School, class of 2022. He lives with his parents, three sisters and two cats. Growing up as a Mexican American student has shaped his experience and perspective. He is proud of his heritage because it is a big part of who he is. Jesus graduated top 10 in his class and has been recognized by the Riverside County Office of Education for his academic achievements. He developed his professional skills while balancing

high school responsibilities, community college courses and extracurriculars. He completed his certification as a Dell repair technician and certification to perform cardiac pulmonary resuscitation. His greatest prestige is winning second place in the 2022 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest and first place in the Central District of California's civics contest. Honored to represent his school and community, Jesus is grateful for the opportunities and to his family who always support his endeavors.

Jesus likes to think of himself as a jack of all trades. He is fascinated with science and technology. His passion for storytelling pushed him into animation and digital art. He had unknowingly been animating since the

days of Flipnote on the Nintendo DSi. His desire to bring his stories to life fueled his skills in digital media. Jesus enjoys magic tricks and considers himself an amateur magician, who specializes in sleight of hand. He has built quite a name for himself in his community, and his schoolmates dubbed him the Magicman.

Jesus is pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer engineering at the University of California, Riverside, and is looking forward to also exploring computer software and mastering his skills in digital art.



3rd
place

GILLIAN CELIS
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA



Gillian Celis is a recent graduate of Eastlake High School, where she led the Philippine American Youth Organization and Chefs on the Rise Club. In her free time, she enjoys reading, playing the cello, painting, practicing wushu, and spending time with her family, including their two dogs Hershey and Skittles. She is fascinated by languages and – although not in her career plans – maintains an interest in law. This fall, she is excited to study nanoengineering at the University of California in San Diego.

***TOP 9 ESSAY FINALISTS**

District of Arizona

Paige Goetzenberger, Arizona
School for the Arts, Phoenix

Eastern District of California

Yuna Bi, Benicia High School,
Benicia

Benjamin Flitcroft, Benicia High
School, Benicia

Southern District of California

Gillian Celis, Eastlake High
School, Chula Vista, California

Oliver Charat-Collins, Canyon
Crest Academy, San Diego

District of Guam

Jin Chung, St. John's School,
Tumon

District of Idaho

Liz Duke-Moe, Boise High School,
Boise

District of Nevada

Dominico Granieri, Reno High
School, Reno

Western District of Washington

Erica Richardson, Ballard High
School, Seattle

***TOP 7 VIDEO FINALISTS**

District of Arizona

Team of Sargun Bhatia and
Diya Daftary, BASIS Chandler,
Chandler

Northern District of California

Jay Paek, Homestead High School,
Cupertino

Southern District of California

Giovanna Sanchez, Bonita Vista
High School, Chula Vista

District of Guam

Team of Rachel Cabales, Kedrick
Diego and Josh Santiago, George
Washington High School,
Mangilao

District of Nevada

Team of Kailey Russell, Josie
Sawyer and Kailey Russell, Galena
High School, Reno

District of Oregon

Team of Maddux Gillett, Jacob
Keaka and Hayden Konstantin,
Sherwood High School, Sherwood

Western District of Washington

Sophia Calandrillo, Shorewood
High School, Shoreline

*2022 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest winners not included in the list. Names listed in order of district.

DISTRICT WINNERS WHO ADVANCED TO THE CIRCUIT AS FINALISTS

District of Alaska

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Lillian Yang of West Anchorage High School in Anchorage; second place (\$500) – Abby Novak of Mat-Su Career and Technical High School in Wasilla; and third place (\$250) – Braeden Boerger of Grace Christian School in Anchorage.

District of Arizona

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Akshita Khanna of BASIS Phoenix in Phoenix; second place (\$500) – Hannah Cluroe of Hamilton High School in Chandler; and third place (\$250) – Paige Goetzenberger of Arizona School for the Arts in Phoenix.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,000) – Hannah Cluroe of Hamilton High School in Chandler; second place (\$500) – Karina Lamadrid of Cesar Chavez High School in Phoenix; and third place (\$250) – the team of Sargun Bhatia and Diya Daftary of BASIS Chandler in Chandler.

Central District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Mary Leung; second place (\$750) – Keshwanth Puligulla; and third place (\$500) – Ella Yee. All students are from Arcadia High School in Arcadia.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Jesus Montes of Rubidoux High School in Jurupa Valley; second place – Grace Yue of Oxford Academy in Cypress; and third place (total of \$500) – the team of Makaela Valdez, Angela Vargas and Amber Gregory of Pacific High School in San Bernardino.

The Central District also invited its first-place winners and their parent/guardian to attend the 2022 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference.

Eastern District of California

Essay Winners: First place – Yuna Bi of Benicia High School in Benicia; second place – Ethan Le of Pleasant Grove High School in Elk Grove; and third place – Benjamin Flitcroft, also of Benicia High School.

Northern District of California (not ranked)

Essay Winners: Aditya Dawar of Amador Valley High School in Pleasanton; Kevin Guo of Cupertino High School in Cupertino; and Ananya Mahadevan of California Connections Academy in Ripon. Each student received \$600.

Video Winners: Kevin Guo of Cupertino High School in Cupertino; Jay Paek of Homestead High School in Cupertino; and Anay Shah of Saint Francis High School in Mountain View. Each student received \$600.

Southern District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Aadhya Tripathi of Mt. Carmel High School in San Diego; second place (\$500) – Gillian Celis of Eastlake High School in Chula Vista; and third place (\$250) – Oliver Charat-Collins of Canyon Crest Academy in San Diego.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Gillian Celis of Eastlake High School in Chula Vista and second place (\$500) – Giovanna Sanchez of Bonita Vista High School in Chula Vista.

District of Guam

Essay Winners: First place (\$150) – Jin Chung of St. John's School in Tumon; second place (\$100) – Reagan Budasi of the Academy of Our Lady of Guam in Hagåtña; and third place (\$50) – Arianne Canlas, also of the Academy of Our Lady of Guam.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$150) – the team of Josh Santiago, Rachel Cabales and Kedrick Diego of George Washington High School in Mangilao; second place (\$100) – the team of Alexander Gayle and Jin Chung of St. John's School in Tumon; and third place (\$50) – Kelvin Lee, also of St. John's School.

District of Hawaii

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Ana Soporean of St. Andrew’s Priory in Honolulu; second place (\$500) – Liam Hutchison of Punahou School in Honolulu; and third place (\$250) – Yunhee Chae of Kaiser High School in Honolulu.

District of Idaho

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Liz Duke-Moe of Boise High School in Boise; second place (\$500) – Abigale Elam of Fruitland High School in Fruitland; and third place (\$250) – Austin Giffen of Timberline High School in Boise.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Ryder Koch, second place (\$500) – Aidan Llewellyn, and third place (\$250) – the team of Abigail Schmidt and Noah Schmidt. All students are from Post Falls High School in Post Falls.

District of Montana

Essay Winners: First place (\$2,000) – Rebecca Smillie of Capital High School in Helena; second place (\$1,000) – Chase Tucker of Corvallis High School in Corvallis; and third place (\$500) – Jenna Nate of Sheridan High School in Sheridan.

Video Winners: First place (\$2,000) – The team of Sofia Tretiak, Francesco Comuzzi and Enrico Scuppa of Terry High School in Terry; second place (\$1,000) – Anna Bauer of Foothills Community Christian School in Great Falls; and third place (\$500) – Samantha Vielleux of Fort Benton High School in Fort Benton.

District of Nevada

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Dominico Granieri of Reno High School in Reno; second place (\$750) – Kaitlyn Hong, also of Reno High School; and third place (\$500) – Sanjay Soni of West Career and Technical Academy in Las Vegas.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – The team of Benjamin Rock, Lupita Ramirez and Kenny Mirzayan of Incline High School in Incline Village; second place (\$750) – the team of Meghan Roussel and Elyse Welsh of Galena High School in Reno; and third place (\$500) – the team of Kailey Russell, Krissy Shaw and Josie Sawyer, also of Galena High School.

District of the Northern Mariana Islands

Essay Winners: First place – John Lawrence Apit, second place – Jenny Min and third place – Samantha Gabrielle Flores. All students are from Marianas High School in Saipan.

Video Winners: First place – Wendy Zha, second place – Amena Mahmud and third place – Grace Ju. All students are also from Marianas High School.

District of Oregon

Essay Winners: First place – Izzie Lee of Lincoln High School in Portland; second place – Eleanor Palandri of Cleveland High School in Portland; and third place – Kate Voltz of Crescent Valley High School in Corvallis.

Video Winners: First place – The team of Tara Subramaniam, Nora Wu and Bailey Armstrong of Lincoln High School in Portland and second place – the team of Hayden Konstantin, Jacob Keaka and Maddux Gillett of Sherwood High School in Sherwood.

Local winners in the District of Oregon will receive cash prizes to be determined by the district.

Western District of Washington

Essay Winners: First place (\$500) – Sophia Rey of Sehome High School in Bellingham; second place (\$300) – Erica Richardson of Ballard High School in Seattle; and third place (\$250) – Nick Lucht of Seattle Academy in Seattle.

Video Winner: First place (\$500) – Sophia Calandrillo of Shorewood High School in Shoreline.

2022 NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST COORDINATORS

Ninth Circuit

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R. Dimmick, U.S. District Court

2022 NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST

JUDGES

Essay Final Judges – PICO Committee Members:

Circuit Judge Ryan D. Nelson, Ninth Circuit; Chief Bankruptcy Judge Margaret M. Mann, Southern District of California; Magistrate Judge Autumn D. Spaeth, Central District of California; and Beth Strosky, Esq., District of Oregon

Video Final Judges – PICO Committee Members and Staff:

District Judge John A. Kronstadt, Central District of California; Bankruptcy Judge Sandra R. Klein, Central District of California; Kelli Sager, Esq., Central District of California; Renée S. Lorda, Assistant Circuit Executive, Office of the Circuit Executive (OCE); and Kari Kelso, Public Education and Community Outreach Administrator, OCE

Preliminary Judges of Essay and Video Entries:

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THE PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH
(PICO) COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE
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THROUGHOUT THE NINTH CIRCUIT WHO CONTRIBUTED
THEIR TIME TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THE CIVICS
CONTEST THROUGHOUT THE NINTH CIRCUIT.



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