



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

Office of the Circuit Executive · 95 7th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 · (415) 355-8800 · mediarelease@ce9.uscourts.gov

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Katherine Rodriguez
mediarelease@ce9.uscourts.gov

2026 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest Focuses on “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”

SAN FRANCISCO—The 2026 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest, an annual essay and video competition, is now accepting entries from high school students who reside within the [geographic region](#) of the Ninth Circuit. The contest theme is “**Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—Your Voice. Your Story. Your America.**” The theme celebrates the 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The contest provides students an opportunity to learn and conduct research about the Declaration of Independence while challenging them to reflect on its meaning and how the rights under the declaration impact them, their families or their communities.

Essay and video winners at the **circuit level** will share \$11,400 in total cash prizes—\$3,000 for first place, \$1,700 for second place and \$1,000 for third place. In addition, **circuit level** first-place winners will be invited to attend part of the 2026 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference, where they will participate in a panel discussion and be recognized for their accomplishments.

Additionally, students will have the opportunity to compete for cash prizes at district-level civics contests sponsored by Ninth Circuit federal courts throughout the circuit. Each district will select their winners who will advance and compete at the circuit-level civics contest.

Complete rules are available on the civics contest website at <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest/>. A student does not have to be a U.S. citizen to be eligible to enter the contest, and children and relatives of federal court employees are not eligible to participate.

The contest is sponsored by the Ninth Circuit Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) Committee, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the federal courts that comprise the Ninth Circuit.

Deadline to submit entries is Friday, March 6, 2026, 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time. District-level winners or finalists will be announced in May and the circuit-level winners in June.

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