

2026 NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST



Cash Prizes*

1st \$3,000[†]
2nd \$1,700
3rd \$1,000

250th Anniversary
of the signing of the Declaration of Independence

LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Your Voice. Your Story. Your America.



An essay and video contest for high school students in the western United States, Guam and Northern Mariana Islands. Contest rules and entry instructions will be available at: <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>

Entries accepted beginning **January 7, 2026**. Deadline for entries is **March 6, 2026**. Sponsored by the United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit.

[†] Plus! Travel and accommodations to attend the 2026 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference.

^{*} May be subject to federal, state or local taxes unless exemptions apply.

LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Your Voice. Your Story. Your America.



In 2026, our nation will celebrate **250** years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence—a document that boldly declared “all men are created equal” and are granted by their Creator the “unalienable Rights” to **Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness**. It further proclaimed that to secure these rights, governments are instituted by consent of the governed. These words not only sparked a revolution but also set the foundation for the values we still strive to uphold today.

Which of these rights sparks your interest to reflect on its meaning and impact?

The Ninth Circuit Civics Contest prompt challenges you to choose one of these enduring rights—Life, Liberty or the Pursuit of Happiness—and tell us: (i) why this right was essential in 1776, (ii) how this right impacts you, your family or your community today; and (iii) what should we do to protect or improve this right moving forward?

The 2026 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest is open to all students, grades 9-12, in public, private, parochial or charter schools, and homeschooled students of equivalent grade status in nine western states and two Pacific island jurisdictions.

Contest rules will be available at <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>. Essay and video entries can be submitted on the website starting **Jan. 7, 2026**. Deadline to submit entries is 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time, **March 6, 2026**.

The contest is organized by the Ninth Circuit Public Information and Community Outreach (“PICO”) Committee. For more information contact the Ninth Circuit Office of the Circuit Executive at civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov.



Southern District of California Local Contest: The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California will conduct a local contest to select finalists for the circuit-wide competition. To be eligible to compete in the local contest, students must reside in Imperial or San Diego County. Local contest winners in each category also will receive prizes of \$1,000 for 1st place, \$500 for 2nd place and \$250 for 3rd place. The winners will be recognized at a reception for all contest participants to be held in Spring 2026. For more information about the district contest, please contact the district court’s community outreach coordinator at community_outreach@casd.uscourts.gov.

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