



Public Information Office
United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

Office of the Circuit Executive · 95 7th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 · (415) 355-8800 · (415) 355-8901 Fax

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: David Madden, (415) 355-8800

Ninth Circuit, San Diego Federal Court Announce Civics Contest Winners

SAN DIEGO – The United States District Court for the Southern District of California and the Ninth Circuit Courts and Community Committee announced today the winners of the 2015 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest. Eight high school students from the greater San Diego area were selected as winners of the contest, which featured the theme, “The Constitution: What the American Dream Means to Me.”

The contest was organized in conjunction with the 2015 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference, a major gathering of the federal bench and bar in the western United States, which will be held next month in San Diego. Open to sophomores, juniors and seniors, the contest challenged students to write an essay or produce a brief video focusing on how the Constitution makes possible the American Dream. Individual students competed in the essay contest, while individuals and teams of up to three students were eligible to enter the video contest. All told, more than 300 students from 45 high schools entered the essay and/or video competition. Judging of the contest involved federal judicial officers, attorneys, law clerks, educators and court staff.

“It was extremely gratifying to see how well received the contest was,” said the Honorable Janis L. Sammartino, a U.S. district judge in San Diego who chairs the Courts and Community Committee. “To have so many students participate reflects well on the efforts of the court, the bar and the educational community here in San Diego to promote civics education.”

The winners in the essay contest were:

- 1st place – Lucile Vigouroux, a senior at the San Diego High School of International Studies;
- 2nd place – Gavin Jackson, a senior at Mission Hills High School; and
- 3rd place – Brian Brooks, a senior at RAI Online Charter School.

Honorable Mention:

Veronica Riley, a senior at Foothills Christian High School; and
Rhys Williams, a sophomore at the San Diego School of International Studies.

The winners in the video competition were all sophomores:

1st place – Martha Rodriguez, San Diego High School of International Studies;
2nd place – Melissa Rodriguez and Astrid Sarinana, Castle Park High School; and
3rd place – Johannah Whitelock and Louise Curtis, San Diego High School of International
Studies.

Cash prizes of \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$500 will be awarded to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners, respectively, in each category of the competition. The prize money was contributed by several federal courts in the Ninth Circuit, using non-appropriated funds, and from donations by two San Diego law firms.

Contest winners also will be invited to the Opening Session of the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference, where they will meet many distinguished jurists and legal practitioners, possibly including Associate Justice Anthony M. Kennedy of the Supreme Court of the United States.

All of the students participating in the contest will be acknowledged and offered a certificate of commendation from the Ninth Circuit.

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