



Public Information Office
United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Ninth Circuit Announces 2017 Civics Contest Winners

SAN FRANCISCO – Young people from Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada and Washington have been selected the winners of the 2017 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest, an educational outreach effort sponsored by the federal courts.

“Not to Be Forgotten: Legal Lessons of the Japanese Internment” was the theme of the contest, which focused on the incarceration of Japanese-American citizens at the outset of World War II and its relevance today as our government seeks to protect the nation from terrorism. Students were challenged to write an essay or produce a short video focusing on legal decisions which sought to strike a balance between national security and civil rights at a time of great uncertainty.

Winners in the essay competition were:

- 1st place – Olivia Colleen Tafs, a freshman at West Anchorage High School in Anchorage, Alaska;
- 2nd place – Andrew Stahl, a senior at Bainbridge High School on Bainbridge Island, Washington; and
- 3rd place – Brandon Shi, a junior at Dougherty Valley High School in San Ramon, California.

Winners in the video competition were:

- 1st place – Joshua Riel, a senior at the Las Vegas Academy of the Arts in Las Vegas, Nevada;
- 2nd place – Tamara Sato and Emily Wu, both juniors at Punahou School in Honolulu, Hawaii; and
- 3rd place – Brianna Chapman, a sophomore at North Coast Preparatory Academy in Arcata, California.

The winning essay will be read and winning video shown on July 17, 2017, during the opening session of the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference in San Francisco, a major gathering of the federal bench and bar from the western states. Essays and videos from all of the finalists will be posted to the contest website – www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest – in early July.

The competition was open to students in grades 9-12 in public, private and parochial schools and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status in nine western states and two Pacific island jurisdictions. More than 1,000 young people entered the contest, which offered cash prizes, an opportunity for travel, and a chance to meet some of the nation's preeminent jurists and legal practitioners.

Federal courts in all 15 judicial districts in the Ninth Circuit held local contests with winners going on to compete in the circuit-wide competition. In all, 45 essays and 20 videos were selected for final consideration by the Ninth Circuit Courts and Community Committee, which organized the contest. Blind judging was employed in both the preliminary and final rounds.

"Civics education makes it possible for young people to become knowledgeable citizens who understand and participate in our democracy. We are extremely pleased to have had so many students from so many different places in the circuit participate," said U.S. District Judge Janis L. Sammartino of San Diego, who chairs the Ninth Circuit Courts and Community Committee.

At the circuit level, prizes of \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$500 will be awarded to first-, second- and third-place winners in both the writing and video competition. In addition, first-place winners along with a parent/guardian will be invited to attend the opening session of the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference.

Prize money and travel costs for the winners are funded through attorney admission fees collected by the federal courts to fund educational programs for the bar and community. Contributions were received from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the federal courts in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Ninth Circuit Courts and Community Committee, established in 2000 by the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit, the governing body for federal courts in the West, seeks to promote public understanding of and confidence in the judicial system. The committee includes federal judges, lawyers, and court staff. This is the fourth consecutive year in which the committee has organized a civics contest in conjunction with the circuit conference.

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