



Public Information Office
United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Civics Contest Finalists Announced

SAN FRANCISCO – Preliminary judging has been completed in the 2020 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest for high school students in the western United States, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. All told, nearly 1,000 young people entered the contest, despite challenges posed by school closures and distance learning due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“The Right to Vote: Milestone Anniversaries” was the theme of the contest. Students in grades 9-12 in public, private and parochial schools and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status were challenged to write an essay or produce a short video with the questions presented: *“In the wake of the 15th and 19th Amendments, barriers remained to prevent United States citizens from voting. Do formal or informal barriers remain today? What additional changes would you make, if any, to Americans’ voting rights?”*

Fifteen federal courts in the Ninth Circuit held local contests with winners advancing to the final round to compete in the circuit-wide competition. In all, 38 essays and 27 videos were selected to advance to the next round for consideration by judges, attorneys, court executives, law clerks, court and library staff, and the Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) Committee, which will announce the winners in late June. 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.

“The Ninth Circuit’s long-standing commitment to civics education is showcased in this year’s 2020 contest. Because our circuit is the largest and busiest in the nation, it is gratifying that so many judges, administrators and attorneys gave generously of their time to contribute to the contest. These individuals helped to organize, promote, administer and judge the contest,” said U.S. District Judge Janis L. Sammartino of San Diego, who chairs the PICO Committee. “Students found themselves in the midst of transitioning to remote learning and yet still made the effort to focus on the legal issues posed by the contest. Despite these challenging circumstances, this year’s contest did not disappoint. The quality of essays and videos and the level of participation were

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excellent. Students examined legal principles, made thoughtful analyses and exhibited insights into our legal system and our constitutional democracy,” Judge Sammartino added. “Our sixth annual essay and video contest has continued the special work done by the circuit in its emphasis on civics education,” Judge Sammartino observed.

The Ninth Circuit takes in the states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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Civics Contest Finalists

District of Alaska – The finalist is the winner of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska. The essay winner is Joseph Wittrock of King Tech High School in Anchorage. He will receive \$1,000.

District of Arizona – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona, which offered prizes of \$1,000, \$500 and \$250 for the top three finishers in both the essay and video competitions. The essay winners are: 1st place, Avneet Kaur of Arizona School for the Arts in Phoenix; 2nd place, Hannah Cluroe of Hamilton High School in Chandler; and 3rd place, Jen Ham of Desert Vista High School in Phoenix. The winners of the video competition are: 1st place, the team of Kaylee Johanson and Jordan Wiener of Arizona School for the Arts in Phoenix; 2nd place, the team of Theodore Lowell, Abrielle Millet and Christian Vasquez of Walden Grove High School in Sahuarita; and 3rd place, the team of Marc Garba and Jiatian Yin of Desert Mountain High School in Scottsdale.

Central District of California – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court and U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, which offered prizes of \$1,000, \$750 and \$500 for the top three finishers in the essay competition and the video competition. The essay winners are: 1st place, Olivia Chen of Arcadia High School in Arcadia; 2nd place, Elizabeth Yeh, also of Arcadia High School; and 3rd place, Genna Gams of Agoura High School in Agoura Hills. The winners of the video competition are: 1st place, the team of Fatima Laureano, Karina Patel and Yadira Garcia of Rubidoux High School in Jurupa Valley; 2nd place, the team of Justine Fisher and Riley Fisher of La Cañada High School in La Cañada Flintridge; and 3rd place, the team of Celine Yang, Maria Solis and Karen Patel, also of Rubidoux High School.

Eastern District of California – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court and the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of California. The essay winners are: 1st place, Krishna Mandal; 2nd place, Gabrielle Malte; and 3rd place, Zachary Green. All students are from Benicia High School in Benicia. The winner of the video competition is Trista Galli of The Met Sacramento High School in Sacramento.

Northern District of California – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California which offered prizes of \$600 for the winners. The three essay winners, in no particular order, are: Amanda Cheng of Castilleja School in Palo Alto; Matt Hsu of San Francisco University High School in San Francisco; and Sahil Venkatesan of Homestead High School in Cupertino. The winner of the video competition is Divya Ganesan, also of Castilleja School.

Southern District of California – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, which offered prizes of \$1,000, \$500 and \$250 for the top finishers in both the essay and video competitions. The essay winners are: 1st place, Danielle Amir-Lobel; 2nd place, Yubeen “Amy” Cho; and 3rd place, Elinor Amir-Lobel. All students are from La Jolla Country Day School in La Jolla. The two winners of the video competition are: 1st place, the team of Taylor Rickert and Jeremy Byrd of Foothills Christian High School in El Cajon; and 2nd place, Angel Zepeda of San Ysidro High School in San Diego.

District of Guam – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the District of Guam, which offered prizes of \$150, \$100 and \$50 for the top three finishers in both the essay and video competitions. The essay winners are: 1st place, Jenny Mann, of St. Johns School in Tumon; 2nd place, Raemier Javelosa of the Academy of Our Lady of Guam in Hagåtña; and 3rd place, Lian Tsiao, also of the Academy of Our Lady of Guam. The winners of the video competition are: 1st place, the team of Putra Sani and James Tabunar of George Washington High School in Mangilao; 2nd place, Shawn Gatchell of Guam High School in Hagåtña; and 3rd place, Joseph Vinch, also of Guam High School.

District of Hawai'i – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the District of Hawai'i, which offered prizes of \$1,000, \$500 and \$250 for the top finishers in the competition. The two winners of the essay competition are: 1st place, Carson Oakley of Kaiser High School in Honolulu, and 2nd place, Alyssa Young of Hawai'i Baptist Academy in Honolulu. The video winners are: 1st place, Emma Ching of Punahou School in Honolulu; 2nd place, the team of Koapono Garcia and Gabriel Compos of Kihei Charter School in Kihei; and 3rd place, Jacob Chmeleck, also of Kihei Charter School.

District of Idaho – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the District of Idaho, which offered prizes of \$1,000, \$500 and \$250 for the top finishers in the competition. The essay winners are: 1st place, Kimball Godfrey of Rocky Mountain High School in Meridian; 2nd place, Andras Britschgi of Sage International School of Boise; and 3rd place, James Giffen of Timberline High School in Boise. The winners of the video competition are: 1st place, Bella Hall of Boise High School in Boise, and 2nd place, the team of Liam Neupert and Piper Myers Poppay of One Stone in Boise.

District of Montana – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana, which offered prizes of \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$500 for the top three finishers in both the essay and video competitions. The essay winners are: 1st place, Zach Mangels, of Skyview High School in Billings; 2nd place, Zander Opperman of Gardiner Public School in Gardiner; and 3rd place, Hannah Martin of Corvallis High School in Corvallis. The winners of the video competition are: 1st place, Nathaniel Broch, also of Corvallis High School; 2nd place, Abigail Clark of Fort Benton High School in Fort Benton; and 3rd place, Monse Arvayo, also of Fort Benton High School.

District of Nevada – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada, which offered prizes of \$1,000, \$750 and \$500 for the top three finishers in both the essay and video competitions. The essay winners are: 1st place, Sophia Socha; 2nd place, Kate Wong; and 3rd place, Alyssa Marie Laguna. All students are from West Career & Technical Academy in Las Vegas. The winners of the video competition are: 1st place, the team of Sandar Aung, Amina Boulakhras and Nesrine Maldi, also of West Career & Technical Academy; 2nd place, the team of Mandy Jiang, Cathleen Liang and Michelle Jiang, also of West Career & Technical Academy; and 3rd place, the team of Trevor Smerz and Austin Phelps of Faith Lutheran High School in Las Vegas.

District of the Northern Mariana Islands – The finalist is the winner of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the District of the Northern Mariana Islands. The winner of the video competition is Richard Baleares of Saipan Southern High School in Saipan.

District of Oregon – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the United States District Court and U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Oregon. The essay winners are: 1st place, Katlyn Kenney, of Lincoln High School in Portland; 2nd place, Aishiki Nag of Tigard High School in Tigard; and 3rd place, Kyra Allen of Wilsonville High School in Wilsonville.

Eastern District of Washington – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington. The winners are: 1st place for essay, Conor Lincoln of A.C. Davis High School in Yakima; 2nd place for video, the team of Katarina Kenlein and Kaden Kenlein of Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane; and 3rd place, Kira Baum, of Delta High School in West Richland.

Western District of Washington – Finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, which offered prizes of \$500, \$300 and \$250 for the top finishers in the competition. The essay winners are: 1st place, Maple Moody of Lakeside School in Seattle; 2nd place, Elizabeth Prater of Columbia River High School in Vancouver; and 3rd place, Anabel Lee of The Downtown School in Seattle. The winner of the video competition is Jacob Olson of North Thurston High School in Lacey.

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