



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

May 13, 2022

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2022 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest Finalists Announced

SAN FRANCISCO – Preliminary judging of the essay and video entries has been completed for the 2022 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest for high school students in the western United States and two Pacific island jurisdictions. In all, the circuit received 800 essays and 112 videos this year.

This year’s contest focused on students’ free speech rights. The contest challenged students to address “What are students’ free speech rights – and responsibilities – on and off campus?” Participants were asked to consider what rights the First Amendment provides to students engaging in free speech, both inside and outside of school.

The contest was open to high school students in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington state, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

In all, 42 essays and 29 videos out of the 912 total entries received were selected to advance to the next round for consideration by judges, court staff and members of the bar. The Ninth Circuit Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) Committee will determine the final winners at the circuit level. PICO is responsible for organizing and sponsoring the contest together with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the 15 federal judicial districts that comprise the circuit.

First-place winners at the circuit level will be invited to attend the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference in Big Sky, Montana, and a total of \$11,400 in cash prizes will be awarded to the top three essay and video winners. Circuit-level winners will receive – \$3,000 for first place, \$1,700 for second place and \$1,000 for third place along with a commemorative prize. If the winners of the video portion of the competition are part of a team, then they will split the total cash prize.

Winners will be announced on the civics contest website <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest/> in June. Finalists in each district are listed in the following pages.

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Civics Contest Finalists

Finalists are the winners selected to advance to the final round of competition. Civics contests sponsored by the judicial districts in the Ninth Circuit offered cash prizes and/or certificates for the winners of their essay and video competition. Below are the winners chosen by participating districts to advance to the next round of the competition at the circuit level:

District of Alaska

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Lillian Yang of West Anchorage High School in Anchorage; second place (\$500) – Abby Novak of Mat-Su Career and Technical High School in Wasilla; and third place (\$250) – Braeden Boerger of Grace Christian School in Anchorage.

District of Arizona

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Akshita Khanna of BASIS Phoenix in Phoenix; second place (\$500) – Hannah Cluroe of Hamilton High School in Chandler; and third place (\$250) – Paige Goetzenberger of Arizona School for the Arts in Phoenix.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,000) – Hannah Cluroe of Hamilton High School in Chandler; second place (\$500) – Karina Lamadrid of Cesar Chavez High School in Phoenix; and third place (\$250) – the team of Sargun Bhatia and Diya Daftary of BASIS Chandler in Chandler.

Central District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Mary Leung; second place (\$750) – Keshwanth Puligulla; and third place (\$500) – Ella Yee. All students are from Arcadia High School in Arcadia.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Jesus Montes of Rubidoux High School in Jurupa Valley; second place – Grace Yue of Oxford Academy in Cypress; and third place (total of \$500) – the team of Makaela Valdez, Angela Vargas and Amber Gregory of Pacific High School in San Bernardino. The Central District is also inviting its first-place winners and their parent/guardian to attend the 2022 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference.

Eastern District of California

Essay Winners: First place – Yuna Bi of Benicia High School in Benicia; second place – Ethan Le of Pleasant Grove High School in Elk Grove; and third place – Benjamin Flitcroft, also of Benicia High School.

Northern District of California (not ranked)

Essay Winners: Aditya Dawar of Amador Valley High School in Pleasanton; Kevin Guo of Cupertino High School in Cupertino; and Ananya Mahadevan of California Connections Academy in Ripon. Each student will receive \$600.

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Video Winners: Kevin Guo of Cupertino High School in Cupertino; Jay Paek of Homestead High School in Cupertino; and Anay Shah of Saint Francis High School in Mountain View. Each student will receive \$600.

Southern District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Aadhya Tripathi of Mt. Carmel High School in San Diego; second place (\$500) – Gillian Celis of Eastlake High School in Chula Vista; and third place (\$250) – Oliver Charat-Collins of Canyon Crest Academy in San Diego.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Gillian Celis of Eastlake High School in Chula Vista and second place (\$500) – Giovanna Sanchez of Bonita Vista High School in Chula Vista.

District of Guam

Essay Winners: First place (\$150) – Jin Chung of St. John’s School in Tumon; second place (\$100) – Reagan Budasi of the Academy of Our Lady of Guam in Hagåtña; and third place (\$50) – Arianne Canlas, also of the Academy of Our Lady of Guam.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$150) – the team of Josh Santiago, Rachel Cabales and Kedrick Diego of George Washington High School in Mangilao; second place (\$100) – the team of Alexander Gayle and Jin Chung of St. John’s School in Tumon; and third place (50) – Kelvin Lee, also of St. John’s School.

District of Hawaii

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Ana Soporean of St. Andrew’s Priory in Honolulu; second place (\$500) – Liam Hutchison of Punahou School in Honolulu; and third place (\$250) – Yunhee Chae of Kaiser High School in Honolulu.

District of Idaho

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Liz Duke-Moe of Boise High School in Boise; second place (\$500) – Abigale Elam of Fruitland High School in Fruitland; and third place (\$250) – Austin Giffen of Timberline High School in Boise.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Ryder Koch, second place (\$500) – Aidan Llewellyn, and third place (\$250) – the team of Abigail Schmidt and Noah Schmidt. All students are from Post Falls High School in Post Falls.

District of Montana

Essay Winners: First place (\$2,000) – Rebecca Smillie of Capital High School in Helena; second place (\$1,000) – Chase Tucker of Corvallis High School in Corvallis; and third place (\$500) – Jenna Nate of Sheridan High School in Sheridan.

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Video Winners: First place (\$2,000) – The team of Sofia Tretiak, Francesco Comuzzi and Enrico Scuppa of Terry High School in Terry; second place (\$1,000) – Anna Bauer of Foothills Community Christian School in Great Falls; and third place (\$500) – Samantha Vielleux of Fort Benton High School in Fort Benton.

District of Nevada

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Dominico Granieri of Reno High School in Reno; second place (\$750) – Kaitlyn Hong, also of Reno High School; and third place (\$500) – Sanjay Soni of West Career and Technical Academy in Las Vegas.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – The team of Benjamin Rock, Lupita Ramirez and Kenny Mirzayan of Incline High School in Incline Village; second place (\$750) – the team of Meghan Roussel and Elyse Welsh of Galena High School in Reno; and third place (\$500) – the team of Kailey Russell, Krissy Shaw and Josie Sawyer, also of Galena High School.

District of the Northern Mariana Islands

Essay Winners: First place – John Lawrence Apit, second place – Jenny Min and third place – Samantha Gabrielle Flores. All students are from Marianas High School in Saipan.

Video Winners: First place – Wendy Zha, second place – Amena Mahmud and third place – Grace Ju. All students are also from Marianas High School.

District of Oregon

Local winners in the District of Oregon will receive cash prizes to be determined by the district.

Essay Winners: First place – Izzie Lee of Lincoln High School in Portland; second place – Eleanor Palandri of Cleveland High School in Portland; and third place – Kate Voltz of Crescent Valley High School in Corvallis.

Video Winners: First place – The team of Tara Subramaniam, Nora Wu and Bailey Armstrong of Lincoln High School in Portland and second place – the team of Hayden Konstantin, Jacob Keaka and Maddux Gillett of Sherwood High School in Sherwood.

Western District of Washington

Essay Winners: First place (\$500) – Sophia Rey of Sehome High School in Bellingham; second place (\$300) – Erica Richardson of Ballard High School in Seattle; and third place (\$250) – Nick Lucht of Seattle Academy in Seattle.

Video Winner: First place (\$500) – Sophia Calandrillo of Shorewood High School in Shoreline.

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