



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

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Ninth Circuit Civics Contest Finalists Announced

SAN FRANCISCO – The 15 federal judicial districts in the Ninth Circuit have determined their local civics contest winners who are advancing as finalists in the preliminary round of the [2025 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest](#), where they will have an opportunity to win additional cash prizes. The Ninth Circuit received 885 essays and 126 video entries from students addressing the theme, “When Duty Calls: Why Exercising the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship is Important to Me.”

Judging panel members are now reviewing and scoring the essays and videos that advanced to the preliminary round of the Ninth Circuit Civics Contest, which is organized by the circuit’s Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) Committee. PICO Committee will determine the final winners of the contest.

First-place winners at the circuit level, along with a parent or guardian, will be invited to attend the 2025 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference. A total of \$11,400 in cash prizes will be awarded to the top three essay and video winners. First place cash prize in each category is \$3,000, second place is \$1,700, and third place is \$1,000. If the winners of the video portion of the contest are part of a team, then they will split the total cash prize for each rank.

The contest was open to all students in grades 9-12 in public, private, parochial and charter schools, and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status, 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.

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

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District of Alaska

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Mariah Abbott, Upstream Learning, Glennallen; Second place (\$500) – Mallory Raun, West Anchorage High School, Anchorage; and Third place (\$250) Kylie Woodhead, Mat-Su Career & Tech High School, Wasilla.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,000) – the team of Everett Piaskowski and Sebastian Young, Homeschool, Willow and Wasilla.

District of Arizona

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,500) – Maya Joffe, Arizona College Prep High School, Chandler; Second place (\$750) – Bran’nu Brown, Brophy College Preparatory, Phoenix; and Third place (\$500) – Delaney Boyd, Shadow Mountain High School, Phoenix.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,500) – the team of Srinidhi Punnam and Neha Santhosh; Second place (Total of \$750) – the team of Zunairah Sadeq, Catalina Prest and Saanvi Sharma; and Third place (Total of \$500) – the team of Vivan Patel, Mihir Sahani and Aayush Shah. All students are from BASIS Chandler in Chandler.

Central District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Aashka Bhuptani, Redondo Union High School, Redondo Beach; Second place (\$750) – Jessica Zhang, Sage Hill School, Newport Coast; and Third place (\$500) – Michael Isayan, North Hollywood High School, Los Angeles.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,000) – the team of Nina Branicio, Natalie Chan and Drexel Ngo, Mark Keppel High School, Alhambra; Second place (\$750) – Zayanna Mejico, Vista del Lago High School, Moreno Valley; and Third place (\$500) – Dan Thanh Nguyen, Northwood High School, Irvine.

The Central District is also inviting their first-place winners, along with a parent or guardian, to attend the 2025 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference.

Eastern District of California

Essay Winners: First place – Shubneet Kaur, Lathrop High School, Lathrop; Second place – Annelise Borer, Forest Lake Christian School, Auburn; and Third place – Alia Hamdani, C.K. McClatchy High School, Sacramento.

Video Winner: First place – the team of Anya Brown, Makenna Hogland and Madison McLellan, Truckee High School, Truckee.

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Northern District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$2,000) – Vikram Mahajan, Mission San José High School, Fremont; Second place (\$1,500) – Filipp Dmitriev, Amador Valley High School, Pleasanton; and Third place (\$1,000) – Meital Zayats, Mountain View High School, Mountain View.

Video Winners: First place (\$2,000) – the team of Finlay Hayes, Shai Ring and Bryan Thompson, Burlingame High School, Burlingame; Second place (\$1,500) – Zachary Bethune, Emerald High School, Dublin; and Third place (\$1,000) – Ryan Chou, Westmoor High School, Daly City.

Southern District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Charlotte Lourey, Valhalla High School, El Cajon; Second place (\$500) – Eesha Dumbre, Mt. Carmel High School, San Diego; and Third place (\$250) – Linda Yu, Canyon Crest Academy, San Diego.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,000) – the team of Kimberly Chan and Kelly Gutierrez; Second place (\$500) – Julary Rebolledo; and Third place (\$250) – Jewel Parker. All students are from Hoover High School in San Diego.

District of Guam

Essay Winners: First place (\$300) – Hailey Pangelinan, Simon A. Sanchez High School, Tamuning; Second place (\$200) – Offeia Yordy, St. John's School, Tumon; and Third place (\$100) – Marianne Clare Vitug, Simon A. Sanchez High School, Tamuning.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$300) – the team of Liam Sarangay and Gracie Serrano; Second place (Total of \$200) – the team of Jake Ren Hoya and Alexander Lance Paguio; and Third place (\$100) – Rhian Elyza Macaldo. All students are from Simon A. Sanchez High School in Tamuning.

District of Hawaii

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,500) – Kaiden Lee; Second place (\$750) – Rand Gushiken; and Third place (\$500) – Sibel Badawi. All students are from 'Iolani School in Honolulu.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,500) – the team of Caroline Croft, Alana Gamez and Leilani Ricks; Second place (\$750) – Kelsey Hebert; and Third place (\$500) – Alina Rudnitsky. All students are from Kalāheo High School in Kailua.

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District of Idaho

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Honey Samantha Reid, Idaho Home Learning Academy, Malad; Second place (\$500) – Victoria Frazier, Moscow High School, Moscow; and Third place (\$250) – Ariella Reagan, Moscow High School, Moscow.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Kate Raley, Boise High School, Boise; Second place (\$500) – Maliah Clawson, Boise High School, Boise; and Third place (Total of \$250) – the team of Stormy Garcia and Shyanne Steele, Post Falls High School, Post Falls.

District of Montana

Essay Winners: First place (\$2,000) – Eva Skibicki, Helena High School, Helena; Second place (\$1,000) – Kimber Koteskey, Foothills Community Christian School, Great Falls; and Third place (\$500) – Josephine Casey, Capital High School, Helena.

Video Winners: First place (\$2,250) – Mairyn Agostinelli, Sentinel High School, Missoula; and Second place (\$1,250) – Trinity Nicholson, Foothills Community Christian School, Great Falls; and (\$500) Anna Bauer, Foothills Community Christian School, Great Falls.

District of Nevada

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,500) – Jamie Anne Arevalo, West Career and Technical Academy, Las Vegas; Second place (\$850) – Logan Wheeler, Explore Knowledge Academy of Public Speaking, Las Vegas; and Third place (\$500) – Camden Zeiler, Lone Star Academy (Homeschool), North Las Vegas.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,500) – the team of Vanessa Lei and Hannah Vuong, West Career and Technical Academy, Las Vegas; and Second place (\$850) – Joan Li, West Career and Technical Academy, Las Vegas.

District of Northern Mariana Islands

Essay Winners: First place (\$200) – Jia Ross Nicdao, Marianas High School, Saipan; Second place (\$150) – Julia Taitano, Marianas High School, Saipan; and Third place (\$100) – Jessica Kim, Saipan International School, Saipan.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$200) – the team of Jiho Kong, Dong Gyu Lee and Dong Hyun Lee, Saipan International School, Saipan; Second place (\$150) – Misha Kim, Saipan International School, Saipan; and Third place (Total of \$100) – the team of Kenny Zhang, Jie Yi Zheng and Maria Zheng, Marianas High School, Saipan.

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District of Oregon

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Emilio Conley, Northwest Academy, Portland; Second place (\$750) – Roy Jones, Baker Web Academy, Baker City; and Third place (\$500) – Kiran Logue, Cleveland High School, Portland.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,000) – the team of Avery Connelly, Ian Conine Reyes, and Anika Rigby, Lincoln High School Portland; and Second place (\$750) – Michelle Ortiz, Forest Grove High School, Forest Grove.

Eastern District of Washington

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Tyler Hill, Hanford High School, Richland; Second place (\$500) – Maeve Korthuis, Lind-Ritzville High School, Ritzville; and Third place (\$250) – Liam McCrudden, Lewis and Clark High School, Spokane.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Ellie Henshaw, Mt. Spokane High School, Mead; Second place (\$500) – Madeleine Morrison, Mt. Spokane High School, Mead; and Third place (\$250) – Julianna Monroe, Hanford High School, Richland.

Western District of Washington

Essay Winners: First place (\$2,000) – Colton Hong, Anacortes High School, Anacortes; Second place (\$1,000) – Jack DeForest, Bothell High School, Bothell; and Third place (\$500) – Ramsey Mesiwala, Seattle Academy of Arts and Sciences, Seattle.

Video Winner: First place (\$2,000) – Xavier Gatlin, Lakeside School, Seattle; Second place (Total of \$1,000) – the team of Martin Demchenko and Hannah Oomen, Skyline High School, Sammamish; and Third place (Total of \$500) – the team of James Miller and Mindon Siegel, Sky Valley Education Center, Monroe.

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