



# United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

Office of the Circuit Executive · 95 7th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 · (415) 355-8800 · [mediarelease@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:mediarelease@ce9.uscourts.gov)

## NEWS RELEASE

June 11, 2025

Contact: Katherine Rodriguez  
[mediarelease@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:mediarelease@ce9.uscourts.gov)

## Ninth Circuit Civics Contest Winners Announced

SAN FRANCISCO – High school and homeschooled students from Alaska, Arizona, California, Nevada and Washington state won the 2025 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest, which challenged students to address the prompt “When Duty Calls: Why Exercising the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship is Important to Me.” Nine students will share a total of \$11,400, and first-place winners, along with a parent or guardian, will be invited to attend the 2025 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference.

Winners of the essay competition who will receive cash prizes are:

**First place**—Colton Hong (\$3,000), Anacortes High School, Anacortes, Washington.

**Second place**—Tyler Hill (\$1,700), Hanford High School, Richland, Washington.

**Third place**—Michael Isayan (\$1,000), North Hollywood High School, Los Angeles, California.

Winners of the video competition who will receive cash prizes are:

**First place**—The team of Srinidhi Punnam and Neha Santhosh (total of \$3,000), BASIS Chandler, Chandler, Arizona.

**Second place**—The team of Vanessa Lei and Hannah Vuong (total of \$1,700), West Career and Technical Academy, Las Vegas, Nevada.

**Third place**—The team of Everett Piaskowski and Sebastian Young (total of \$1,000), Homeschooled, Willow and Wasilla, Alaska.

“Congratulations to this year’s winners! And thank you to all the students who participated in the 2025 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest. Everyone submitted such thoughtful and inspiring responses to this year’s prompt: ‘When Duty Calls: Why Exercising the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship is Important to Me.’ I am deeply encouraged by all the students who participated in this year’s competition and who took the time to reflect on how exercising their rights and responsibilities as citizens is of vital importance to our Democracy. I am also grateful to the family members and teachers who supported them,” said Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Mary H. Murguia.

The Ninth Circuit received 885 essays and 126 video entries from students who competed at the local contests held by 15 judicial districts throughout the Ninth Circuit. Of all entries received, 45 essays and 39 videos advanced to the Ninth Circuit for consideration. Based on that review,

— more —



# United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

Office of the Circuit Executive · 95 7th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 · (415) 355-8800 · [mediarelease@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:mediarelease@ce9.uscourts.gov)

Page 2 of 2

12 essays and 12 videos were selected for final consideration. The Ninth Circuit's Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) Committee members participated in the final phase of judging these entries. The contest is sponsored by the PICO Committee, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the federal courts that comprise the Ninth Circuit.

Essay finalists who made it to the top 12 for final consideration in addition to the circuit winners are: Delaney Boyd, Shadow Mountain High School, Phoenix; Emilio Conley, Northwest Academy, Portland; Shubneet Kaur, Lathrop High School, Lathrop, California; Charlotte Lourey, Valhalla High School, El Cajon, California; Vikram Mahajan, Mission San José High School, Fremont, California; Jia Ross Nicdao, Marianas High School, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands; Offeia Yordy, St. John's School, Tumon, Guam; Linda Yu, Canyon Crest Academy, San Diego; and Jessica Zhang, Sage High School, Newport Coast, California.

Video finalists who made it to the top 12 for final consideration in addition to the circuit winners are: the team of Zunairah Sadeq and Saanvi Sharma, BASIS Chandler, Chandler, Arizona; the team of Nina Branicio, Natalie Chan and Drexel Ngo, Mark Keppel High School, Alhambra, California; Dan Thanh "Jolie" Nguyen, Northwood High School, Irvine, California; the team of Anya Brown, Makenna Hogland and Madison McLellan, Truckee High School, Truckee, California; Kelsey Hebert, Kalāheo High School, Kailua, Hawaii; the team of Avery Connelly, Ian Conine Reyes and Anika Rigby, Lincoln High School, Portland; Ellie Henshaw, Mt. Spokane High School, Mead, Washington; and the team of Martin Demchenko and Hannah Oomen, Skyline High School, Sammamish, Washington.

Winning essays and videos will be posted on the civics contest website <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest/> in July.

The contest was open to high school-age students who reside within the geographic area of the circuit. Prizes and contest-related expenditures are funded through attorney admission fees collected by the federal courts in the Ninth Circuit to fund educational programs for the bar and community.

The PICO Committee was established in 2000 by the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit, the governing body for federal district and bankruptcy courts in nine western states and two Pacific island jurisdictions. The committee seeks to promote public understanding of and confidence in the judicial system through civics education and outreach to the community and media.

# # #