

HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST OPENS FOR 2011-2012

Written by Rachel Gillespie
Monday, 03 October 2011 08:22

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HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST OPENS FOR 2011-2012

BEING AN AMERICAN ESSAY CONTEST FOCUSES ON CONSTITUTION

Students and Their Teachers Compete for Cash Prizes Up to \$1,000

Arlington, VA – U.S. high school students and their teachers are invited to participate in the [Bill of Rights Institute's](#) sixth annual [Being an American Essay Contest](#)

The largest contest of its kind in the country, the Being an American Essay Contest explores the Founding principles outlined in the Constitution. The contest is administered by the Bill of Rights Institute, a non-profit educational organization in the Washington, D.C. area devoted to educating young people about the Constitution and Founding principles. The 2011-2012 contest is sponsored by the History Channel.

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“This contest is unique in that it gives students the opportunity to think about the important Founding principles communicated in our Constitution,” said Dr. Jason Ross, Bill of Rights Institute Vice President of Education Programs. “This context is vital to helping students see their Founding principles as a meaningful part of the American experiment of self-government.”

Specifically, students are asked to share their thoughts on the Constitution by answering the following question: “How does the Constitution establish and maintain a culture of liberty?”

The top three student winners from each of the five geographical regions will be awarded cash prizes of \$1,000 (First Place), \$500 (Second Place), and \$250 (Third Place). Teacher sponsors for each student winner will also receive a cash prize of \$100.

“The contest not only honors and awards sponsoring teachers, but also equips them with free lesson plans and other supplemental materials that meet state and national academic standards so they can easily incorporate the essay contest into their classrooms. The Contest is really a tribute to the excellent work teachers do in the important task of civic education,” said Ross.

Over 80,000 students have participated in the essay contest since it began in 2006.

“We are pleased to support the Bill of Rights Institute’s Being an American Essay Contest,” said Dr. Libby O’Connell, SVP, Corporate Outreach and Chief Historian, History Channel. “The contest encourages students to think critically and truly makes the past relevant in their lives today.”

Complete contest details can be found below. Further information, including submission criteria, lesson plans and background information on the Constitution, Bill of Rights, Founders and the Founding principles are available at www.BillofRightsInstitute.org/Contest.

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MEDIA FAST FACTS:

BEING AN AMERICAN ESSAY CONTEST

2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR PARTICIPATING REGIONS:

North Eastern Region:

Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont

Southern Region:

Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, D.C., West Virginia as well as Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands

Mid-Western Region:

Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin

Central Region:

Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming

Western Region:

Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington as well as Guam, American Samoa, and American Armed Forces Schools Abroad (APO)

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION: Bill of Rights Institute, Arlington, VA.

The Bill of Rights Institute, founded in 1999, is a nonprofit educational organization. The mission of the Bill of Rights Institute is to educate young people about the words and ideas of America's Founders, the liberties guaranteed in our Founding documents, and how our Founding principles continue to affect and shape a free society.

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FUNDING PROVIDED BY: History Channel (New York City, NY).

CONTEST GOAL: To help promote dialogue among students and teachers about American Founding principles. The Essay Contest serves as a key part of the Bill of Rights Institute's mission to educate young people about the words and ideas of America's Founders, the liberties guaranteed in our Founding documents, and how our Founding principles continue to affect and shape a free society.

ESSAY QUESTION: "How does the Constitution establish and maintain a culture of liberty?"

ELIGIBILITY: Students in grades 9-12 who are U.S. citizens or legal residents and are either attending public, private, religious, or charter schools, being home-schooled, or participating in a GED or correspondence school program but are no older than 19 years of age. Military bases and U.S. territories are also invited to participate.

ESSAY LENGTH: No more 1,000 words.

JUDGING CRITERIA:

- Adherence to Essay Question
- Originality
- Organization
- Writing Style
- Depth of Analysis

JUDGES: High school teachers

STUDENT CASH PRIZES: Three cash prizes per region will be awarded to students:

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- First Prize: \$1,000 each
- Second Prize: \$500 each
- Third Prize: \$250 each

TEACHER CASH PRIZES: Cash prizes of \$100 will be awarded to the teachers of all winning students:

CONTEST START DATE: September 17, 2011

DEADLINE FOR ESSAY SUBMISSIONS: December 15, 2011 at 11:59 p.m. PST. All essays must be submitted at www.BillofRightsInstitute.org/Submit .

WINNERS ANNOUNCED: February 2012

WEB SITE AND CONTEST GUIDELINES: www.BillofRightsInstitute.org/Contest