



NEWS RELEASE

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2023 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest Finalists Announced

SAN FRANCISCO – Local civics contest held by 15 judicial districts throughout the Ninth Circuit as part of the 2023 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest has concluded. Each district selected its top essays and videos to advance to the circuit level for the preliminary round. In all, the Ninth Circuit received 966 essays and 86 videos this year.

The theme of the contest, “The 28th Amendment to the United States Constitution: What Should Our Next Amendment Be?” asked students to focus on three questions – (1) What amendment would you propose for our Constitution? (2) Why? and (3) How would you get your amendment ratified?

The contest was open to students in grades 9-12 in public, private, parochial, 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.

Judges, members of the bar and court staff are now reviewing and scoring 45 essays and 30 videos out of the 1,052 total entries received that were selected to advance to the preliminary round at the circuit level. The Ninth Circuit Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) Committee, judges and court executives will determine the final winners at the circuit level. PICO is responsible for planning the theme and organizing the contest. Sponsors include PICO, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the 15 federal judicial districts that comprise the Ninth Circuit.

First-place winners at the circuit level will be invited to attend the 2023 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference, 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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Page 2 of 5

Civics Contest Finalists

Below are the names of students from each district who are advancing to the next round of the competition at the circuit level.

District of Alaska

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Manning Zhang, West Anchorage High School, Anchorage; Second place (\$500) – Logan Cuddy, Service High School, Anchorage; and Third place (\$250) – Tobin Montalbo, Juneau-Douglas High School, Juneau.

District of Arizona

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Sophia El Imrani, BASIS Chandler, Chandler; Second place (\$500) – Madeleine Chang, Hamilton High School, Chandler; and Third place (\$250) – Akshita Khanna, BASIS Phoenix, Phoenix.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Mia Ramos, Tanque Verde High School, Tucson; Second place (Total of \$500) – the team of Vedansh Gupta, Avinash Gobburi and Yatheendra Chilakamarri, BASIS Chandler; and Third place (\$250) – Matthew Urena, Gila Ridge High School, Yuma.

Central District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – David Estrada, Windward School, Los Angeles; Second place (\$750) – Jason Sioeng, Arcadia High School, Arcadia; and Third place (\$500) – Courtney Tetteh-Martey, Sage Hill School, Newport Coast.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,000) – the team of Diego Garcia and Alexander Carney, Orange County School of the Arts, Santa Ana; and Second place – Devin Huynh, Dr. Richard A. Vladovic Harbor Teacher Preparation Academy, Wilmington.

The Central District is also inviting their first-place winners and their parent/guardian to attend the 2023 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference.

Eastern District of California

Essay Winners: First place – Ananya Mahadevan, California Connections Academy, Ripon; Second place – Vanessa Bedoy, Waterford High School, Waterford; and Third place – Stella Johnson, C.K. McClatchy High School, Sacramento.

Video Winners: First place – the team of Ananya Nand and Jarom Cookson, Lincoln High School, Lincoln.

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Page 3 of 5

Northern District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$2,000) – Mihika Agrawal, Cupertino High School, Cupertino; Second place (\$1,500) – Emma Foster, Castilleja School, Palo Alto; and Third place (\$1,000), Marie Molotsi, also from Castilleja School.

Video Winners: First place (\$2,000) – Stella Tenta, Castilleja School; Second place (\$1,500) – the team of Ananya Nukala, Julia Karner and Callie Kocher, also from Castilleja School; and Third place (\$1,000) – the team of Kevin Guo, Annie Shang and Viktor Maletin, Cupertino High School.

Southern District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Grace Palumbo, Mt. Carmel High School, San Diego; Second place (\$500) – Noah Luken, Rancho Bernardo High School, San Diego; and Third place (\$250) – Delaney Alonso, also from Mt. Carmel High School.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,000) – the team of Julianna Villegas, Kieu Oanh and Akina Tran, Hoover High School, San Diego; Second place (Total of \$500) – the team of Jacob Gabriel, Jacquelyn De La O Chino and Kay Tieu, also from Hoover High School; and Third place (Total of \$250) – the team of Son Tran, Elishia Stribling and Monica Medina, also from Hoover High School.

District of Guam

Essay Winners: First place (\$150) – Beatrix Zamora, Second place (\$100) – Joanna Lagaña; and Third place (\$50) – Jemellyn Borcione. All students are from the Academy of Our Lady of Guam in Hagåtña.

District of Hawaii

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Kainoa Kelly, 'Iolani School, Honolulu; Second place (\$500) – Atticus Gifford, Punahou School, Honolulu; and Third place (\$250) – Liam Hutchison, also from Punahou School.

Video Winner: First place (\$1,000) – Teah Simon, 'Iolani School, Honolulu.

District of Idaho

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Ayden Kelley, Moscow High School, Moscow; Second place (\$500) – Megan Tomlison, Liberty Charter School, Nampa; and Third place (\$250) – Isabella Ristine, also from Moscow High School.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Delaney Blenkinsop, Boise High School, Boise; Second place (Total of \$500) – the team of Bradley Mason and Ashton Hickerson, Post Falls High School, Post Falls; and third place (\$250) – Riley McLing, also from Post Falls High School.

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Page 4 of 5

District of Montana

Essay Winners: First place (\$2,000) – McCants Meinders, Gallatin High School, Bozeman; Second place (\$1,000) – Riley Munson, also from Gallatin High School; and Third place (\$500) – Olivia Buoy, Corvallis High School, Corvallis.

Video Winners: First place (\$2,250) – Kimber Koteskey, Foothills Community Christian School, Great Falls; and Second place (\$1,250) – Anna Bauer, also from Foothills Community Christian School. The \$500 prize for a third-place winner was equally distributed to the first- and second-place winners since the district did not have a third-place winner.

District of Nevada

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,500) – Weston Raydon, Reno High School, Reno; Second place (\$850) – Kalista Kingsbury, Southwest Career and Technical Academy, Las Vegas; and Third place (\$500) – Samantha Phelan, also from Southwest Career and Technical Academy.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,500) – the team of Charity Caday, Annie Lin and Samantha Manuel, Southwest Career and Technical Academy, Las Vegas; Second place (\$850) – the team of Danah Gaspar, Breanna Anton and Kaitlyn Landry, also from Southwest Career and Technical Academy; and Third place (\$500) – Grace Li, West Career and Technical Academy, Las Vegas.

District of Northern Mariana Islands

Essay Winners: First place (\$100) – Jaimer Shawne Casama, Second place (\$75) – Tyana Kay Cepeda and Third place (\$50) – Jia Ross Nicdao. All students are from Marianas High School in Saipan.

Video Winners: First place (\$100) – the team of Xinyi Ni and Vincent Razon, Kagman High School, Saipan; Second place (\$75) – the team of Joseph Victor Jimenez and Pony Tang, Marianas High School; and Third place (\$50) – Gavril Myles Santiago, Mt. Carmel School, Chalan Kanoa.

District of Oregon

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

Essay Winners: First place – Kate Stuckart, Central Catholic High School, Portland; Second place – Laura Johnson, Crescent Valley High School, Corvallis; and Third place – Jordynn Risdal, Creswell High School, Creswell.

Video Winners: First place – the team of Sam Skolnik and Josephine Emmanuel-Mitchell, Franklin High School, Portland.



Page 5 of 5

Eastern District of Washington

The Eastern District of Washington selected a total of three winners, in essay and video categories combined, who will receive cash prizes. Two other students will advance to the circuit level but without cash prizes.

Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Luke Blue for his video entry, Mt. Spokane High School, Spokane; Second place (\$500) – Leo Rangel for his video entry, Hanford High School, Richland; and Third place (\$250) – Victoria Hausman for her essay entry, also from Mt. Spokane High School.

Also Advancing: Andrew Davidson for his essay entry, College Place High School, College Place; and Emmitt DeHart for his essay entry, Pullman High School, Pullman.

Western District of Washington

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Hannah Kurland-Cohen, The Downtown School, Seattle; Second place (\$750) – Luke Alexander, Sehome High School, Bellingham; and Third place (\$500) – Alexander Olsen, Seattle Academy of Arts and Science, Seattle.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – James Sripranaratanakul, Idea High School, Tacoma; Second place (\$750) – Hailey Bacalzo, Innovation Lab High School, Bothell; and Third place (\$250) – Annika Lindberg, West Seattle High School, Seattle.

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