



United States District Court District of Montana

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CIVICS CONTEST FINALISTS ANNOUNCED

BILLINGS – Preliminary judging of the essay and video entries has been completed in the 2021 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest for high school students in the western United States, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Over 700 students entered the contest despite challenges they confronted from transitioning to return to school to continuing their participation in online distance learning due to the coronavirus outbreak.

This year's contest focused on important events in American history and global events that have challenged us to find a balance between inalienable rights and collective responsibilities to each other. Students were asked, "How should we as a society strike the appropriate balance within the framework of our Constitution between safeguarding our rights and fulfilling our responsibilities to each other?"

The contest was open to young people 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. Students in grades 9-12 in public, private, parochial, charter schools and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status were invited to participate.

All 15 districts in the Ninth Circuit held local contests with district winners advancing to the circuit level for the final round of the circuit-wide competition. In all, 45 essays and 31 videos were selected to advance to the next round for consideration by judges, attorneys, court executives, court and library staff and the Ninth Circuit's Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) Committee. PICO is responsible for organizing and sponsoring the contest together with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the federal district and bankruptcy courts under its jurisdiction.

In addition to cash prizes, previous first-place winners of the essay and video contest were invited to the annual Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference held in July. However, since the conference was cancelled for 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, cash awards were increased. A total of \$11,400 in cash prizes will be awarded to the top three finishers in both the essay and video competitions. The winners will receive – \$3,000 for first place, \$1,700 for second place and \$1,000 for third place along with a commemorative prize.

Among the finalists are the winners of a local contest sponsored by the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana. Prizes of \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$500 were offered to the top finishers in the competition. The winners are:

Essay: First place, Leah Veress, a junior at Gardiner High School in Gardiner; second place, Landen Conner a senior at Corvallis High School in Corvallis; and third place, Frances Carrasco, also a senior at Corvallis High School.

Video: First place, Brenden Bird; second place, Josie Arganbright; and third place, William Ullery. All students are seniors at Fort Benton High School in Fort Benton.

The Ninth Circuit includes the states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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