



THE AMERICAN LEGION

# HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

*A Constitutional Speech Contest*

*Chairman's Guide*

# Table of contents

Introduction

Chapter 1	<b>Contest history and purpose</b>	1
Chapter 2	<b>Promoting your contest</b>	2
Chapter 3	<b>Rules and regulations</b>	4
Chapter 4	<b>Suggested contest script</b>	12
Chapter 5	<b>Contest briefings</b>	14
Chapter 6	<b>Key points to remember</b>	18
Chapter 7	<b>Contest floorplan</b>	19
Chapter 8	<b>Chairman’s checklist</b>	20
Chapter 9	<b>Contest follow-up</b>	22
Chapter 10	<b>Contest forms and materials</b>	23

# Introduction

This guide has been developed to assist Oratorical program chairmen at all levels in organizing and conducting a successful contest. It is intended only as an aid and should not be used as a promotional piece, distributed to schools or given to prospective participants. To improve this revision of the *Chairman's Guide*, we have incorporated material previously included in the *Oratorical Contest Guidelines Manual*.

Arrangements for contests leading to the department finals are the responsibility of each department. In some states, rules and regulations below the department finals level may vary from those used in the national contest; contest chairmen at the post and district levels should be familiar with their respective department's rules.

When preparing for and conducting an Oratorical contest, remember that you are serving young men and women. They are the ones most affected by mistakes, so be thoroughly prepared and familiar with the rules.

The American Legion wants every high school to provide an opportunity for its students to participate in this citizenship education program. However, it is up to local American Legion posts to make the program work.

## Chapter 1

# Contest history and purpose

## History

William A. Kitchen, a past department commander of Missouri, is credited with founding The American Legion's National High School Oratorical Contest. He experimented with the contest in a few high schools in and around Kansas City, Mo., during the 1934-1935 school year. He went on to become the first Department of Missouri Oratorical chairman and conducted a statewide Oratorical program in 1935 and 1936.

Kitchen encouraged The American Legion to adopt the Missouri Oratorical Contest plan as a national program. The first national contests were held in 1938, with 11 departments and 4,000 participants competing. At the national finals in Norman, Okla., John Janson of Phoenix won first place. The national finals returned to Missouri for its 50th anniversary in 1987, hosted by Lee Summit Senior High School in Lee Summit.

In 1997, the week-long regional, sectional and national finals format was changed to a weekend competition of quarterfinal, semifinal and national final contests in The American Legion's headquarters city of Indianapolis. In 2007, the contest's official name became the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program – A Constitutional Speech Contest.

Since its beginning, the contest has awarded more than \$3 million in scholarships to participants at the national level of competition. It currently awards \$203,500 annually to department winners competing at the national level. Thousands more are awarded in scholarships to winners at the department, district/county, and post levels.

## Purpose

The Oratorical program was developed primarily to instill a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the U.S. Constitution in high school students. Participants also grow in leadership ability, their capacity to think and speak clearly and intelligently, and understanding of the rights, responsibilities, obligations and privileges of U.S. citizens.

The program also assists students in affording a college education, with the first-place winner receiving \$25,000 and the next two finishers taking home \$22,500 and \$20,000, respectively. First-round participants in the national contest receive a \$2,000 scholarship. Second-round participants who do not advance to the final round receive an additional \$2,000 scholarship.

## Past national champions

For a complete list of past national champions, visit [legion.org/oratorical/champions](http://legion.org/oratorical/champions).

## Chapter Two

# Promoting your contest

### Working with the National Speech and Debate Association

The American Legion has a corporate relationship with the National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA). Your department chairman has contact information for your local NSDA representative, usually a high school teacher or speech and debate coach. This is an opportunity to promote the Oratorical program to local students who already participate in speech competitions. Students earn double NSDA points when they compete in an American Legion Oratorical contest.

### Working with your schools

To effectively promote the Oratorical program in your school and community, post chairmen and others involved with the contest must be in contact with school officials.

During the first visit with school staff, determine the best methods of informing students about the Oratorical program. Consider addressing them directly through assemblies, classes or other gatherings if the school allows it. You can also try school bulletin boards, the school newspaper and social media. Use any and every opportunity to tell students about the Oratorical program.

The more you spread the word in your community and promote participation, the better chance you'll have of gaining participants. Ask other post members, your Auxiliary unit and your Sons of The American Legion squadron to help get the word out.

Another way to build interest is invite a youth audience to your contest, with a goal of attracting future participants. If the contest is conducted during school hours, it may be possible to schedule it at a high school.

Also, get local elementary students studying the Constitution by sponsoring essay and speech contests with less stringent requirements than the Oratorical contest. Involvement at an early age could attract youth once they become eligible.

Do not overlook parents when seeking support for the Oratorical program. Contact the PTA or a similar organization to explain the contest and request its support during a meeting.

### Suggested talking points

When addressing an audience, your mission is to persuade those in attendance that the Oratorical program is worth their time to participate or promote. Here are some suggested talking points for school assemblies and civic groups. Adapt them to fit your needs.

- Ladies and gentlemen, this opportunity to appear before you is an honor and privilege for me as an American Legion member.

- Before I begin, would anyone like to receive a scholarship of up to \$25,000?
- We Legionnaires are proud of our organization, and we are particularly proud of our youth activities, which do so much for the development of our nation's young people. Few organizations can match in size and scope the youth service program carried on by The American Legion under the direction of its Americanism Commission.
- This occasion is an opportunity for you as well as for me, as I explain an American Legion program that can benefit high school students educationally and financially.
- Established in 1938, the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program is designed to instill in high school students a greater knowledge and appreciation of the U.S. Constitution. Participants also grow in leadership ability, their capacity to think and speak clearly and intelligently, and understanding of the rights, responsibilities, obligations and privileges of U.S. citizens.
- Each contestant will give a prepared oration on some phase of the Constitution, emphasizing a citizen's duties and obligations to our government.
- Some states require the "assigned topic" portion at local levels. Refer to your respective state rules.
- Include remarks on how and where to register and the dates and locations for the contest.
- To date, The American Legion has awarded more than \$3 million in scholarships to Oratorical contestants at the national level. The three national finalists receive \$25,000, \$22,500, and \$20,000 respectively. In addition, contestants who win their state finals contest and represent their states at the national contest receive no less than \$2,000.
- Awards offered by Post \_\_\_\_\_ include \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_. Other awards offered in the state of \_\_\_\_\_ include \_\_\_\_\_.
- America's future depends on the success of today's youth. Knowledge of the Constitution will help prepare them to meet the challenges of tomorrow's world.
- Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your kind attention.
- I will be happy to answer any questions concerning this program either now or at the end of this meeting.

## Chapter Three

# Rules and regulations

### Department contests

Arrangements for contests leading to the department finals shall be the responsibility of each department (state) organization of The American Legion. For levels of competition prior to the department finals, the rules and regulations set forth in this guide are not mandatory; they are offered as a guideline. However, all department finals contests shall conform with national contest procedures, rules and regulations if the department wishes its finalist to compete in the national finals.

A winner certified to The American Legion's National Americanism Division by a department that did not conduct its final competition in conformity with the rules and regulations may, in the judgment of the Americanism Division's director or the director's representative, be disqualified from the national contest.

Each department may certify one contestant for the national contest. If the department winner is unable to compete for any reason, the department's first runner-up may be substituted following approval by The American Legion's Americanism Commission. A department first runner-up accepted into the national contest is entitled to all national awards and compensation that the department winner would have received had he or she participated.

Department chairmen are required to review all scorecards from the department final within 48 hours to ensure that the appropriate winner was certified based on official rules, regulations, scoring and tiebreaking procedures. If a mistake is found within 48 hours, the chairman will contact National Headquarters at (317) 630-1204 for further instruction. Exactly 48 hours after department final results are announced, those results become official and cannot be changed.

Department winners must be certified to the Americanism Division by the certification date listed in the current year's Official Rules brochure, which is updated annually and online at [legion.org/oratorical/resources](http://legion.org/oratorical/resources). Department Oratorical chairmen and department adjutants will receive a link via email to certify their department winners.

### Scholarships

Scholarship awards are presented to the three finalists in the national contest's final round as follows: first place \$25,000, second place \$22,500, third place \$20,000. Each department winner who is certified for and participates in the first round of the national contest will receive a \$2,000 scholarship. Each first-round winner who participates in the second round but does not advance to the final round will receive an additional \$2,000 scholarship to pursue education beyond high school.

Scholarships awarded by The American Legion to the three national finalists, department winners and first-round winners eliminated during the second round of competition may be used to attend any U.S. College, University, Seminary, Trade, or Technical School.

Contestants must give both their prepared oration and assigned topic discourse to receive the scholarship.

In addition to scholarships awarded by the national organization, several hundred scholarships are awarded to Oratorical participants at post, district/county and department levels.

## **Eligibility**

Eligible participants in The American Legion's High School Oratorical Scholarship Program shall be a legal United States citizen, possess legal residency, or legal visitor status to be in the United States.

Contestants must be bona fide students, described as any student younger than 20 on the date of the national contest who is presently enrolled in a high school or junior high school (public, parochial, military, private, or state accredited home school). commencing with grade 9 and terminating with grade 12. Students must be enrolled in high school or junior high school when participating at any level of the program.

High school students who graduate early during the school year are eligible to compete if they are not enrolled full time in a college, university, trade school or other institution of higher learning at the time of the department finals contest.

Contestants must be legally domiciled within or attend an educational institution within the department (state) where they enter competition. Contestants can enter competition in only one department.

The three national finalists will be ineligible to participate again.

## **The prepared oration**

The prepared oration must be on some aspect of the U.S. Constitution, with emphasis on citizens' duties and obligations to our government. The same subject and oration used in the department contest must be used in the national contest.

The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant and not take up less than eight minutes or more than 10 minutes for delivery. It must be delivered in English.

Contestants may have in their possession a copy of their prepared oration in the first holding room, electronic or hard copy. They may consult the copy until they exit the first holding room to begin the contest, at which time it will be surrendered to the contest official monitoring the first holding room.

Quotations must be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than 10 words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally.

## **Assigned topic discourse**

The assigned topic discourse must not be less than three minutes or more than five minutes for delivery. The purpose of the assigned topic discourse is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of his or her research, and the ability to discuss the topic as related to the basic principles of government under the U.S. Constitution.

The assigned topic shall be drawn by the contest official in full view of the audience immediately before delivery of the last speaker's prepared oration and will be made known to the audience and each contestant approximately five minutes prior to the time of delivery. Generally, the assigned topic is a constitutional amendment; it could be the entire amendment or specific articles. Each year, the list of assigned topics is made available prior to the contest and posted online at [legion.org/oratorical/topics](http://legion.org/oratorical/topics).

Contestants may have in their possession their assigned topic notes in the first holding room, electronic or hard copy. They may consult these notes until they exit the first holding room to begin the contest. At that time any notes will be surrendered to the official monitoring the first holding room.

Quotations must be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than 10 words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally.

## **No foreign languages or songs**

All contestants at each contest level are required to speak in the English language.

It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases of a foreign language into the prepared oration and/or assigned topic to develop the argument, establish a point, etc. However, the vast majority of the prepared oration and/or assigned topic must be delivered in English.

Singing a song in any language is not permitted and will result in immediate disqualification. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song provided proper attribution is made.

## **Dress**

Uniforms of any kind are not permitted. Appropriate business attire is required. Contestants are not permitted to wear awards and medals from previous competition.

## **Contest regulations**

A drawing shall be held by the official in charge of the contest to determine the order in which the contestants will appear. The contest chairman shall announce the title of the contestant's

prepared oration immediately after introducing him or her as contestant No. 1, contestant No. 2, etc. The chairman will request the audience refrain from applause until the judges have made their decision.

A raised platform is not compulsory but strongly recommended. The use of notes, amplification, lectern or speaker's stand by contestants or prompting in any manner is not permitted. Props are not permitted.

The use of any type of electronic/digital data gathering, receiving and/or transmitting equipment in any form by contestants or members of the audience is prohibited.

The time allotted for contestants to deliver their prepared oration shall be between eight and 10 minutes, and between three and five minutes for the assigned topic.

The contest chairman will name an official timer who will keep an accurate time record of each contestant. The timekeeper will be on the main floor in full view of the contestants. The timekeeper shall begin timing each contestant at the start of the prepared oration. The timer should be equipped with a stopwatch and time cards for the prepared oration with the figures 8, 9 and 10. When eight minutes have been used, the time warning card with the figure 8 shall be placed in full view of the speaker, following with 9 and 10 as the speaker progresses. The same procedure shall be used with cards bearing 3, 4 and 5 during the assigned topic discourse. The contest chairman shall announce the time used by each contestant for the prepared oration and the assigned topic immediately after each contestant speaks.

Contestants will remain in a private room where the discourse of other speakers cannot be heard until it is their turn to speak; they will be under the supervision of a person appointed by the contest chairman. As the contestants conclude their prepared orations, they will return to a soundproof waiting room. As speakers conclude their assigned topic discourse, they shall not be allowed to associate with contestants who have not fulfilled the assigned topic requirement.

About five minutes prior to the time of the delivery of the assigned topic discourse, contestant No. 1 will be informed of the topic drawn for the assigned topic and shall retire to privacy under the direction of a person appointed by the contest chairman, whose duty it shall be to see that no contestant is permitted to consult any text or notes having any connection with the subject matter upon which he or she is to speak, other than the actual words of the topic on the card drawn.

Succeeding contestants will be called on in the order in which they previously appeared. They shall also, in turn, be informed of the topic of the assigned topic discourse and escorted to privacy in the manner provided for contestant No. 1.

The contest chairman will be expected to introduce each contestant by name immediately before announcing the judges' decision.

## Judges

Judges are an integral part of an Oratorical contest. Their qualifications are considered carefully, as the decision of the judges is final and must be reached without bias. Impartial judging in all contests is the key to fairness and success of the program, which results in the selection of a national champion.

All department finals and the national contest must utilize 5 to 7 judges. No publicity shall be given to the names of judges in advance of the contest. During the contest, judges will be seated in different locations and render their final decision without consultation with other judges or any other person.

Judges will be advised that a lack of emphasis in the prepared oration and assigned topic discourse must result in their downgrading the contestant. Judges are permitted to downgrade a contestant up to a maximum of 10 points for failure to speak on the U.S. Constitution. The contest chairman will announce any violation of time for each contestant. A penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof, shall be assessed against the contestant's total score.

Following the last assigned topic discourse, the judges, timekeepers, tabulators and contest chairman may proceed to a private room for final review and tabulation.

## Tabulators

The contest chairman will appoint no less than three tabulators for the department finals. It is their responsibility to review the judges' scorecards to be certain they are fully tabulated and signed before they are submitted for final tabulation.

## Tabulation procedures

Judges scorecards will be numbered 1 through 5, 6, or 7 in the upper right hand corner. Since only 5 Judges scores will be entered into the official tabulation, it is the Moderator's determination on which judges are to be counted. Typically, the first 5 judges to complete scoring are used. When this is accomplished for all judges' scorecards, the contestants' scores are totaled. When totaling the tabulation card, the contestant receiving the low score will be declared the winner. (**Example:** If one contestant receives two firsts, two seconds and a third on the judges' scorecards and tabulation card, his or her total position number points will be nine; if the second contestant receives two firsts, two seconds, and a fourth, his or her total position number points will be 10. Even though the second contestant receives two firsts, his or her total position number point score of 10 will place them second.

## Tiebreaking procedures

If, after tabulation of the judges' position number, two or more contestants receive the same placement point score (not total points) total, the tie shall be broken by comparing the position

number of scores of the five judges for the tied contestants. One of the contestants will be the winner over the other by a majority of the judges' position number when only the placement of the tied contestants is considered.

In the examples on below and on the following page, the highest rank in record of choice (one being the highest) for each judge is circled. The contestant that receives the majority of the judges' record of choice will be declared the winner.

## TWO-WAY TIEBREAKING EXAMPLE

Contestants - Record of Choice

Judges	1	2	3	4	5
1	①	2	3	4	5
2	3	②	5	1	4
3	5	④	1	3	2
4	2	①	3	4	5
5	①	3	2	5	4
Totals	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	14	17	20

  
**WINNER**

In the two way example, Contestant No. 2 is the winner since that contestant received the highest ranking in the majority of the judges' record of choice.

## THREE-WAY TIEBREAKING EXAMPLE

Contestants - Record of Choice

Judges	1	2	3	4	5
1	3	2	①	5	4
2	①	3	4	2	5
3	4	3	②	1	5
4	2	3	①	4	5
5	2	①	4	3	5
Totals	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	15	24

  
**WINNER**

In the three way example, Contestant No. 3 is the winner since that contestant received the highest ranking in the majority of the judges' record of choice.

The decision of the judges shall be final.

Judges' scorecards for department finals and the national contest will not be divulged to anyone at the site of the contest. All national contest judges' scorecards become the property of The American Legion National Headquarters.

## National finals contest

For information regarding the national finals, visit [legion.org/oratorical/finals](http://legion.org/oratorical/finals).

## Travel expenses

The national organization of The American Legion will pay the travel and lodging expenses of department winners and one chaperone to the national contest. All contestants **younger than 18** must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. The preference for those **older than 18** is that they be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian as well.

The national organization of The American Legion will not assume liability for personal injury, property damage or loss sustained by any contestant or chaperone en route to or from the contest; however, The American Legion does carry a nominal group accident insurance policy on contestants certified into the national contest.

National finals contestants will travel by an air carrier selected by The American Legion or personal automobile if previously approved by the national organization of The American Legion.

## **TV and radio**

Live television and radio broadcasts are permitted in all contests as well as recording or other types of media for later showing, provided: 1) the lighting and other site conditions are the same for all contestants; 2) the recording or broadcasts shall in no way distract the contestants or interfere with the pre-announced scheduled time of the contest; 3) the normal speaking voice of the contestant is not interfered with or amplified within the auditorium; and 4) The American Legion is in no way financially obligated without its prior approval. If live television and radio broadcasts are permitted, all contestants must sign a release to use photographs/videos.

## Chapter Four

# Suggested contest script

### Opening remarks

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the (contest level) of The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program.

Before we begin the contest, I ask that Legionnaires uncover and everyone please rise for the invocation given by \_\_\_\_\_.

#### INVOCATION

Please join \_\_\_\_\_ in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### PLEDGE

You may re-cover.

### Audience briefing

This is the \_\_\_\_\_ annual American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program Contest, and this morning you will be hearing \_\_\_\_\_ speakers. I have several introductions, but I will save them until after the conclusion of the contest. You will notice that the contestants are not in the auditorium at this time. Throughout the competition portion, they will appear on stage only to deliver their respective orations.

In fairness to all contestants, I ask that you do not applaud until the contest is completed. I would also remind you that there will be no photos or video during these proceedings. It would be a good idea to put your cameras and phones away until the end of the contest. There will be an opportunity to take photos at the end of this round. In addition, if anyone in the audience is carrying a phone or any other electronic device, please make sure that it is turned off. I would also ask that anyone wearing an alarm type watch deactivate it.

Our speakers will be introduced by number only. Prompting in any manner is not permitted. Doing so may result in the disqualification of the speaker. Each speaker is about to deliver an eight -to 10-minute prepared oration on some phase of the Constitution of the United States. The contestants are not allowed to use notes, a podium or a sound system.

The contestants will be shown a time card at the \_\_\_\_\_th, \_\_\_\_\_th, and \_\_\_\_\_th minute mark of their oration. If there is a violation of the time requirement, a penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof, shall be assessed against the contestant's total score.

## Prepared oration

There will be a short pause between contestants to allow the judges time to mark their score cards. Before introducing the last speaker, I will ask a member of the audience to draw an assigned topic from the four provided. When the last contestant has spoken for seven minutes on the prepared oration, contestant No. 1 will be taken to a private room and given the topic card and allowed five minutes to prepare his or her assigned topic presentation. I will read the assigned topic to you before contestant No. 1 is introduced. All contestants then speak for three to five minutes on the same subject.

If everyone is ready, I will call for contestant No. 1. The title of his/her oration is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

(ORATION IS GIVEN)

The time for contestant No. 1 is \_\_\_\_ minutes and \_\_\_\_\_ seconds.

There is (no) time penalty.

(PAUSE)

(Follow the same procedure for the remaining contestants.)

## Assigned topic discourse

For the past five minutes, contestant No. 1 has been in a private room preparing for the assigned topic presentation. The topic the contestants will address during this portion of the contest is (read the topic).

Now, if everyone is ready (pause and look around), I will call for contestant No. 1.

(ASSIGNED TOPIC IS GIVEN)

The time for contestant No. 1 is \_\_\_\_ minutes and \_\_\_\_\_ seconds. There is (no) time penalty.

(Follow the same procedure for the remaining contestants.)

## Introductions and winner announcements

This concludes the contest. Will the judges and tabulators please go directly to the tabulation room for determination of the contest results?

After the contest is completed, introduce judges and contestants by name, city and state. Make any other introductions at this time.

Announce the winners and present awards.

The contest may be closed with a benediction prayer if desired.

## Chapter Five

# Contest briefings

### Overview

To conduct a successful contest, everyone involved – contestants, judges, tabulators, timers, escorts, ushers, assigned topic preparation room monitors and audience members – must know what is expected of them. For many, it may be their first Oratorical contest.

The contest must be conducted by officials who thoroughly understand their jobs. We owe it to all to conduct the contest in as professional a manner as possible using well-informed, capable people. We do that by taking the time to thoroughly brief everyone associated with the contest.

### Contestants

Contestants should have an opportunity to visit the contest site and familiarize themselves with the facility and contest procedures. Along with their coaches and/or parents, they should be given time alone to test the contest room's acoustics. This often-overlooked practice helps reduce a contestant's fear of speaking in an unfamiliar place.

Take every opportunity to put contestants at ease while still keeping the contest on schedule.

The chairman or their designated representative should meet contestants as they arrive and welcome them to the contest. At a designated time, the contestants, their parents and coaches should meet as a group for the briefing.

Explain the contest operation to them. Don't assume they know the basics. Advise them they will have from eight to 10 minutes to deliver their prepared oration, that the drawing for the assigned topic will be just prior to the last speaker, and that each contestant will have five minutes to prepare for their three-to-five minute assigned topic presentation. If contestants are competing in their first contest, spend more time to make sure they thoroughly understand how it operates.

At times, distractions arise that are beyond the control of the contest officials. For example, determine what to do if a fire alarm should sound and advise contestants what will happen. Point out other possible distractions, like uncontrollable noise that might come from an adjoining room or even from the auditorium.

Advise contestants where the timekeepers will be seated and at what point they will raise the numbered timecards. It is standard procedure for the timers to raise the cards on the minute, not 15 seconds before or after the minute.

Advise contestants that the judges will be scattered throughout the audience, but under no circumstances should they be told their exact locations.

The chairman should give a thorough briefing, providing adequate time to answer any questions contestants might have and to make them comfortable in what may be a stressful environment.

Just prior to the start of the contest, the chairman should have contestants draw for speaking order. The best method is to have numbers written on small pieces of paper and have each of the contestants come forward, one at a time, and draw a number.

Throughout the briefing and prior to the actual contest, there should be no contact between the judges and the contestants. Always keep the two groups separated, preferably in different rooms.

Briefing contestants and others involved is important. Take the time to do it right.

## **Judges**

The general responsibilities of contest judges were covered earlier in Chapter Three. However, it is important they receive a thorough orientation prior to the contest.

Judges should be instructed to report to a private room away from the contestants and others attending the event at least 45 minutes prior to the contest so that adequate time is available for the briefing. The room in which the briefing is held should be off-limits to everyone except the judges and contest chairman (or the chairman's designated representative).

The chairman should welcome the judges, thank them for serving, and distribute the official scorecards, scratch tally sheets, pencils and clipboards. The chairman should cover all aspects of the contest, especially how it will be conducted and the procedures for arriving at a winner.

## **Scorecard and scoring system**

Judges should carefully study and understand the scorecard and scoring system. As a guideline, judges are encouraged to award their top choice (speaker) approximately 90 points with others proportionally lower. (This is particularly important in the event of a tie.)

Lack of emphasis in the prepared oration and the assigned topic on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government must result in the judges downgrading the contestant involved. Judges may downgrade a contestant up to a total of 10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution.

Each judge shall insert the total number of points credited to the contestant and also insert in the placement column the placement for each contestant in accordance with the highest total point scores. If a tie exists in the total point scores on a judge's scorecard, the judge must adjust the scoring of the tied contestants so that no two contestants have the same total point score. This will enable the judge to rank one contestant above the other in the placement column.

Judges shall refrain from discussing any phase of the contest or their judging methods with anyone but the contest chairman following the contest.

**Note:** Judges should be provided study materials prior to the contest including the national rules brochure and a copy of the U.S. Constitution. But before that, the chairman should have given much thought to the selection of judges. Appointments should be based on ability and not on political or personal favor. Select them with care, then make sure they know their responsibilities.

## **Timekeepers**

There must be two timekeepers for the contest seated on the main floor and in full view of the contestants as they deliver their orations.

A chairman often takes for granted that a timer knows how to operate a stopwatch. There are several types of stopwatches, so the chairman should meet with the timekeepers to discuss their responsibilities and practice using the stopwatches.

The chairman also should ensure timers have the materials needed to fulfill their responsibilities, including two stopwatches, a timekeeper record card, time cards numbered 8, 9, and 10 for the prepared oration, and time cards numbered 3, 4, and 5 for the assigned topic discourse.

Timers must understand they are to begin timing when a contestant begins to speak and stop when the contestant ceases to speak. The timers will enter the exact time consumed on the timekeeper record card.

## **Tabulators**

The tabulation of judges' scorecards is crucial to avoid a scoring problem. The tabulators should have a thorough knowledge of the scoring process, be adept with a calculator (to check judges' addition totals), and be familiar with the tie-breaking procedures (discussed in Chapter Three). The tabulation process should be thorough and not expedited or abbreviated by time restraints. Before the results are announced, all tabulators and the contest chairman should be certain that the proper procedures were followed and the correct winner identified.

## **Ushers**

The number of ushers required for a contest must be determined by the contest chairman based on the number of doors affording entrance to the contest room or auditorium. The contest chairman should meet with ushers prior to the contest and advise them of their responsibilities, which are to assist in seating the audience and to distribute programs. They will control the entrance to the auditorium while a contestant is speaking and ensure there is no interruption.

## **Escorts**

Contest chairmen must determine the number of escorts needed for the contest. Some appoint one escort for each contestant; escorts remain with their designated contestants throughout the contest, except when they are giving their prepared oration or assigned topic presentation.

Other chairmen appoint one or two escorts to assist in moving contestants from the holding room to the auditorium stage. Either method is permitted and the layout of the contest facility or the availability of help will dictate which method will work best.

Ushers and escorts are often overlooked by chairmen when they give instructions. This should not happen, as every official's role is critical to the contest's overall operation.

### **Assigned topic preparation room monitor**

The assigned preparation room monitor's responsibility is to make sure that the contestant understands the five-minute preparation time and that no outside notes have been brought into the room. The contestant can use a blank sheet of paper to assemble thoughts, if desired. The contestant must return the scratch paper to the monitor following the the preparation time. The door to the room should remain open, and the monitor will ensure that any noise in the area is kept to a minimum.

## Chapter Six

# Key points to remember

1. Make certain all contest officials understand their duties and responsibilities. Provide thorough instructions to the judges, making certain each understands the scoring system and timing/penalty requirement.
2. Instruct contestants regarding contest rules. Allow them time to inspect the contest site prior to the contest, including holding and assigned topic preparation rooms.
3. Announce that there will be no applause or photography during the contest, and that the audience must remain seated and quiet during a contestant's presentation. Photographs may be taken after the contest has concluded.
4. Have contestants draw for speaking order and remain in a soundproof room until called on to speak. Contestants will be introduced by number and must return to the waiting room after their presentation.
5. Introduce contestants by name, city and state only after final tabulation, but prior to announcing the results. Judges and contest officials may also be introduced at this time.
6. Select an American Legion official to award prizes to the winners.
7. Provide instructions to the contest winner regarding their next level of competition.
8. Advise Judges that contestants are to be scored using Content and Speaking Skills as identified on their score sheets. Personal views on a subject will not influence the outcome of the contest. Judging must be non-partisan.



## Chapter Eight

# Chairman's checklist

### Facilities required

- Name of school or other facility
- Name of auditorium
- Seating capacity
- Stage or raised platform
- U.S. flag
- Acoustics (quality)
- Waiting room(s) with at least 10 chairs
- Soundproof, close to auditorium
- Waiting room(s) for assigned topic preparation
- Class bells disconnected
- Parking facilities available

### Materials required

- Clipboards for judges
- Stopwatches (2)
- Pencils
- Calculator or adding machine
- Judges' instructions/scorecards
- Judges' scratch tally sheets
- Tabulator instructions/tabulation card
- Timekeeper instructions/timekeeper record card
- Numbered time cards
- Assigned topic cards
- Printed programs
- National rules brochures
- Certificates of appreciation for contest workers

## **Appointments**

- Judges (5)
- Tabulators (3)
- Timekeepers (2)
- Escorts
- Ushers
- Assigned topic preparation room monitors
- Publicity chairman
- Transportation chairman

## **Audience**

- Local high schools
- Speech teachers
- Civic leaders
- American Legion, Auxiliary and SAL officials

## **Publicity arrangements**

- Invite local news media
- Photographer

## **Entertainment (contingent on contest arrangements)**

- Banquet/luncheon

## **Acknowledgments**

- Thank-you notes, certificates of appreciation, etc., for all contest personnel

## Chapter Nine

# Contest follow-up

1. Notify the contest chairman at the next level of competition who won your contest. If the name of the contact at the next level is not known, notify your department adjutant.
2. Show your appreciation to judges by presenting them with certificates of appreciation or plaques. It may also be proper to honor contestant coaches with some form of recognition.
3. Provide a post-contest press release to the media. Go to [legion.org/oratorical/resources](http://legion.org/oratorical/resources) to download an example.
4. Write thank-you notes or letters to all contest personnel.
5. Schedule contest winners to present their oration before other school and/or civic groups.
6. Follow your contest winner through future levels of competition.

## Chapter Ten

# Contest forms and materials

The following contest forms are examples. They may be reproduced locally for your use, or you may contact your department headquarters for additional copies.

- Judge's scorecard
- Tabulation card
- Timekeeper record card
- Judge scratch tally sheet (prepared oration)
- Judge scratch tally sheet (assigned topic)

Additional materials for use in preparation for an Oratorical contest include the following items:

- Contest promotional brochure
- Contest files are available for download at [legion.org/oratorical/resources](http://legion.org/oratorical/resources), including:
  - » National rules brochure. Current year's rules.
  - » *How to Conduct the National High School Oratorical Contest* video series
  - » National finals video. Video of the most recent National Oratorical Contest.
  - » Sample news releases to send to local media to promote the contest. One promotes the upcoming event and the other names the winner.
  - » Sample PSAs to send to local broadcast media to promote the contest
  - » Contest PSA video
  - » Excel judge's scorecard and tabulation card spreadsheet
  - » Judge scratch tally sheet (prepared oration)
  - » Judge scratch tally sheet (assigned topic)
- Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution. The text of both documents. Stock No. 755.206. Consult Emblem Sales catalog for pricing. Available at [emblem.legion.org](http://emblem.legion.org).

For current contest information on The American Legion's High School Oratorical Scholarship Program, go to [legion.org/oratorical](http://legion.org/oratorical).



# THE AMERICAN LEGION

HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM - "A CONSTITUTIONAL SPEECH CONTEST"



## JUDGE'S SCORECARD

NAME OF JUDGE: \_\_\_\_\_

A. CONTENT	Contestants					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Was the speech original, fresh, and direct, applying the contestant's knowledge?	Prepared Oration	12 points				
	Assigned Topic	4 points				
2. Did the contestant skillfully select examples, descriptions, analogies, and specific data?	Prepared Oration	12 points				
	Assigned Topic	4 points				
3. Was the speech logical, well organized, and developed?	Prepared Oration	12 points				
	Assigned Topic	4 points				
4. Did the contestant show a comprehensiveness of knowledge of the subject matter?	Prepared Oration	16 points				
	Assigned Topic	6 points				
<b>B. SPEAKING SKILLS</b>						
1. Did the contestant use volume, rate, pitch, and diction effectively?	Prepared Oration	6 points				
	Assigned Topic	4 points				
2. Rate the contestant's style: language use, word arrangement and selection, and transitions.	Prepared Oration	6 points				
	Assigned Topic	4 points				
3. Were body actions -- poise, eye contact, posture, gestures, facial expressions -- appropriate?	Prepared Oration	6 points				
	Assigned Topic	4 points				
<b>SUB-TOTAL</b>						
PENALTIES: 1 point for each minute or fraction thereof over or under allotted time	Prepared Oration					
	Assigned Topic					
1-10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution						
<b>Final Total Points</b>						
Position Number - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (Highest Points = 1st place, second highest points = 2nd place, etc.)						

Score all contestants - NO TIES PERMITTED

Judge's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



# THE AMERICAN LEGION

## High School Oratorical Scholarship Program



### TABULATION CARD

JUDGES	CONTESTANTS RECORD OF CHOICE						CONTESTANTS – FINAL TOTAL POINTS *(for 3-way tiebreaker only!)*					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
<b>TOTALS</b>												

NOTE: all TABULATOR'S signatures are required below.



# THE AMERICAN LEGION

## High School Oratorical Scholarship Program

### TIMEKEEPER RECORD CARD



CONTESTANT	Time Consumed PREPARED ORATION		Time Consumed ASSIGNED TOPIC	
	Minutes	Seconds	Minutes	Seconds
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

NOTE: both TIMEKEEPER'S signatures are required below.

---

# SCRATCH TALLY SHEET FOR JUDGES

## PREPARED ORATION

QUARTER FINAL / SEMI FINAL / FINALS (CIRCLE ONE) NO. _____ <b>CONTESTANT</b> NO. _____
---

DOES THE CONTESTANT'S ORATION RELATE TO SOME ASPECT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES WITH EMPHASIS ON THE DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF A CITIZEN TO OUR GOVERNMENT?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

SCORE	A. CONTENT	REMARKS OR NOTES
(12)	1. Was the speech original, fresh and direct, applying the contestant's knowledge?	
(12)	2. Did the contestant skillfully select examples, descriptions, analogies and specific data?	
(12)	3. Was the speech logical, well organized and developed?	
(16)	4. Did the contestant show a comprehensiveness of knowledge of the subject matter?	
SUBTOTAL		

	B. SPEAKING SKILLS	REMARKS OR NOTES
(6)	1. Did the contestant use volume, rate, pitch and diction effectively?	
(6)	2. Rate the contestant's style: language use, word arrangement and selection; transitions	
(6)	3. Were body actions — poise, eye contact, posture, gestures, facial expressions— appropriate?	
SUBTOTAL	ADDITIONAL NOTES OR COMMENTS	
PENTALTY PTS		
TOTAL	FOR JUDGES USE ONLY FOR ADDITIONAL SCORING	

# SCRATCH TALLY SHEET FOR JUDGES

## ASSIGNED TOPIC

QUARTER FINAL / SEMI FINAL / FINALS (CIRCLE ONE)  
 NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTESTANT**  
 NO. \_\_\_\_\_

DID THE CONTESTANT SPEAK ON THE SUBJECT OF THE ASSIGNED TOPIC?  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

SCORE	A. CONTENT	REMARKS OR NOTES
(4)	1. Was the speech original, fresh and direct, applying the contestant's knowledge?	
(4)	2. Did the contestant skillfully select examples, descriptions, analogies and specific data?	
(4)	3. Was the speech logical, well organized and developed?	
(6)	4. Did the contestant show a comprehensiveness of knowledge of the subject matter?	
SUBTOTAL		

	B. SPEAKING SKILLS	REMARKS OR NOTES
(4)	1. Did the contestant use volume, rate, pitch and diction effectively?	
(4)	2. Rate the contestant's style: language use, word arrangement and selection; transitions	
(4)	3. Were body actions — poise, eye contact, posture, gestures, facial expressions— appropriate?	

SUBTOTAL	ADDITIONAL NOTES OR COMMENTS
PENALTY PTS	
TOTAL	

FOR JUDGES USE ONLY FOR ADDITIONAL SCORING



## THE AMERICAN LEGION

P.O. Box 1055  
Indianapolis, IN 46206  
(317) 630-1204  
americanism@legion.org

 **legion.org**

Follow The American Legion online:

 **legion.org/facebook**

 **twitter.com/AmericanLegion**