

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program

~ A Constitutional Speech Contest ~

This year will mark the 82nd Annual Oratorical Contest which first started as a National Contest in 1938 with 11 Departments advancing their finalists to National competition. Today there are approximately 30,000 contestants participating each year representing 52 Departments of the American Legion. Nationally there is \$138,000 in scholarships handed out not to mention scholarship money that is generated on the District and Department levels which will vary from Department to Department. The overall national contest winner gets an \$18,000 scholarship. Second place takes home \$16,000, and third gets \$14,000. Each department (state) winner who is certified into and participates in the national contest's first round receives a \$1,500 scholarship. Those who advance past the first round receive an additional \$1,500 scholarship. The American Legion's National Organization awards the scholarships, which can be used at any college or university in the United States.

Speech is a part of every High School curriculum in the U.S., as is the study of our U.S. Constitution. The American Legion has taken these two studies, public speaking and knowledge of the document that guides our Democracy, and defined a structure for our youth to express the various facets of the US Constitution and American citizenship – a constitutional speech contest that provides scholarship funding.

There are two segments to the competition; in the first segment, contestants deliver an eight to ten-minute prepared oration on their subject of choice from the U S Constitution. The second segment is one of four assigned subjects that are made know in a random selection minutes before the contestant must deliver that oration. This year's assigned subject will be chosen from the 1st, 4th, 13th or 21st Amendments.

Information has been distributed to high schools across the country and each American Legion Post, as well as posted on the Legion's website at www.legion.org. The Sons are encouraged to promote this program in their local communities and then assist in conducting the contests. Most contests at the Post level are held in January, District contests in February and Department contests in March. The 2019 National Finals will be April 5-7 in Indianapolis at the Wyndham Indianapolis West Hotel, 2544 Executive Drive, Indianapolis, IN. Quarterfinal and semifinal contests are scheduled for Saturday, April 6, with the finals scheduled for Sunday, April 7.

Submitted by,
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