

# 2021 NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST

*What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?*

*Cash Prizes!†*  
1<sup>st</sup> \$2,000\*  
2<sup>nd</sup> \$1,000  
3<sup>rd</sup> \$500



An essay and video contest for high school students in the western United States and Pacific Islands. Contest rules and entry instructions available at <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>



Entries accepted beginning **February 1, 2021**. Deadline for entries is **March 17, 2021**. Sponsored by the United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit.

**\*Plus! Travel and accommodations to attend the 2021 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference in Big Sky, Montana, if current COVID-19 pandemic is under control.**  
† May be subject to federal, state or local taxes unless exemptions apply.

# What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?

Our Constitution both confers rights and establishes responsibilities. The Preamble that begins the Constitution speaks of the people's commitment to "secure the blessings of liberty," while also recognizing the need to "promote the general welfare." Among the many rights enshrined in the Constitution, for example, are the right to peaceably assemble, the right to free exercise of religion, and the right to a speedy and public jury trial in criminal cases.

Over the course of our country's history, global events have challenged us to find a balance between critical rights like these and our responsibilities to each other. The shelter-in-place orders implemented during the coronavirus pandemic, the rationing orders imposed during World War II and the Great Depression, and the mandatory smallpox vaccination programs instituted in the early 1900s are just some examples of times when we have been asked to curtail our normal freedoms for the benefit of our entire community. At the same time, each of us has a civic responsibility to participate in and contribute to our democracy. 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?

"What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?" is the theme of a civics contest focusing on these important issues. Students are encouraged to discuss these themes with reference to the Constitution, and to consider the historical examples identified above, or other relevant events in American history, in their entries. In preparing an essay or video submission addressing the theme, students are encouraged to explain what part they believe each of us plays in working toward the "more perfect Union" described in the Constitution.

Individual students can express their thoughts and ideas on the theme in an essay of between 500 and 1,000 words. Individuals and teams of up to three students can produce a 3-5 minute video on the theme. A student may submit both an essay and video, and may submit only one essay and be involved in the production of only one video.

The contest is open to high school students in the Ninth Circuit (made up of nine western states and two Pacific Island jurisdictions). Students from public, private, parochial and charter schools and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status may enter. Children of federal judges, chambers staff, and employees of federal court offices are not eligible to participate.



Top: Empty supermarket shelves in Everett, Washington. Photo taken on March 14, 2020 by [Cindy Shelby](#).

Above: Social distancing circles marked out in Washington Square Park in San Francisco. Photo taken on May 27, 2020 by [Christopher Michel](#).

Front image: Students learning about war rationing at school in Washington, D.C. Photograph by Roger Smith in 1943 for the U.S. Office of War Information. Source: Library of Congress.

<https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>



The United States Courts for the District of Montana will conduct a local contest to select finalists for the circuit-wide competition. To be eligible to compete in the local contest, students must reside in the State of Montana. Local contest winners in each category also will receive prizes of \$2,000 for 1<sup>st</sup> place, \$1,000 for 2<sup>nd</sup> place, and \$500 for 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Winners of the local contest will go on to compete in the circuit-wide contest.

For more information about the district contest, please contact:  
[Sarah Nagy](mailto:Sarah_Nagy@mtd.uscourts.gov) – (406) 829-7154 / [Sarah\\_Nagy@mtd.uscourts.gov](mailto:Sarah_Nagy@mtd.uscourts.gov).



## What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?

### 2021 NINTH CIRCUIT ESSAY CONTEST

**Who May Enter:** The contest is open to high school students in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, the United States Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Students in the 9th through 12th grades attending public, private, parochial and charter schools, and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status are invited to participate. Children of federal judges, chambers staff, and employees of federal court offices are not eligible to participate.

**Contest Theme: “What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?”**

Our Constitution both confers rights and establishes responsibilities. The Preamble that begins the Constitution speaks of the people’s commitment to “secure the blessings of liberty,” while also recognizing the need to “promote the general welfare.” Among the many rights enshrined in the Constitution, for example, are the right to peaceably assemble, the right to free exercise of religion, and the right to a speedy and public jury trial in criminal cases.

Over the course of our country’s history, global events have challenged us to find a balance between critical rights like these and our responsibilities to each other. The shelter-in-place orders implemented during the coronavirus pandemic, the rationing orders imposed during World War II and the Great Depression, and the mandatory smallpox vaccination programs instituted in the early 1900s are just some examples of times when we have been asked to curtail our normal freedoms for the benefit of our entire community. At the same time, each of us has a civic responsibility to participate in and contribute to our democracy. 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?

Students are encouraged to discuss these themes with reference to the Constitution, and to consider the historical examples identified above, or other relevant events in American history, in their entries. In preparing an essay submission addressing the theme, students are encouraged to explain what part they believe each of us plays in working toward the “more perfect Union” described in the Constitution.

**Length and Format:** Essays should be between 500 to 1,000 words. While not required, proper use of footnotes and bibliographies will be credited during judging. Footnotes and bibliographies will not be included in the word count. Essays must be submitted electronically on this website – <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest> – as a Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat document. When entering the contest, you will be provided instructions for uploading your document. A student may submit both an essay and a video. A student may submit only one essay and be involved in the production of only one video.

**Contest Duration:** Entries will be accepted beginning February 1, 2021. **The deadline for entries is 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on March 17, 2021.** Finalists will be selected in May and the winners announced in late May.

**Judging:** Judging will be based on the following criteria:

- 1) **Understanding of constitutional principles** **40 points**  
Demonstrates clear understanding of: (a) the balance between the constitutional rights and responsibilities discussed in the essay, (b) how the events in American history discussed in the essay reflect this balance between constitutional rights and responsibilities



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**2021 NINTH CIRCUIT ESSAY CONTEST**

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| 2) | <b>Clarity and effectiveness in expressing the theme</b><br>Organizes and communicates concepts and ideas clearly  | <b>30 points</b> |
| 3) | <b>Grammar, spelling and composition</b><br>Uses correct spelling, proper grammar and sentence composition         | <b>25 points</b> |
| 4) | <b>Use of footnotes, bibliographies</b><br>Properly identifies and attributes information taken from other sources | <b>5 points</b>  |

**Release Forms:** Should you become a finalist in the contest, you will be required to submit a release form allowing the Ninth Circuit to publish your essay in print publications and on court public websites. In addition, contest winners will be required to provide and authorize use of photographs of themselves in contest-related promotional materials.

**Disqualification:** Providing false information, not adhering to the rules, not meeting the submission deadline, or not providing a release form if requested may result in disqualification.

**Questions:** Contact the Office of the Circuit Executive, (415) 355-8873 / [civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov).