



Department of Tennessee
American Legion
High School Oratorical
Scholarship Program

2026

~ A Constitutional Speech Contest ~

Potentially earn
\$28,000 in
scholarships

Introduction

The purpose of the American Legion Oratorical Contest is to encourage a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States among high school students and to encourage their oral expression in a public manner. Other objectives of the contest gauge a student's ability to speak clearly and with expression as students present their ideas about the freedoms and responsibilities of American citizenship in a convincing manner.

Scholarships are awarded by the American Legion of Tennessee and in cooperation with the National American Legion organization. Winners may use their scholarship to attend any accredited college or university, junior college or vocational trade school within the United States following graduation from high school, unless the winner enters service in the Armed Forces, which would extend the eligibility period. There are four different competitions a student could advance through, District, Division, Department (State) , and the National Contest. Cash awards and scholarships are offered at all four levels of the competition. The National winner advancing through the state and national contests could receive up to \$28,000 in cash and scholarships.

The contest begins at the local level, as sponsored by members of an American Legion post in your community. Students interested in competing must coordinate with their local American Legion post for a sponsor and complete the official application. We recommend students and parents first meet with a leader from their local Legion post to discuss the competition and offer a practice presentation of their speech. The meeting can be held at a student's school. Applications must reach the American Legion of Tennessee, Department Headquarters by **February 9, 2026**.

American Legion High School Oratorical Contest for 2026

Program Facts

The American Legion National High School Oratorical Program was first conducted in 1938. Since its beginnings, over 30,000 contestants have participated at the National contest, representing each of the 50 states and territories where the American Legion has members.

The Department of Tennessee awards over \$ 6,000 to contestants who compete within the state-level competition each year. The winner of the State competition advances to the National competition held in May of each year at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan, to compete against each winner from all 50 states and U.S. territories. Those representing their state at the National contest will receive no less than \$2,000 along with travel expenses.

Rules and Regulations for Contestants

Students are expected to present two timed oral speeches totally from memory to an audience of Legion members, parents, and oratorical speech judges and other interested attendees.

The first speech is called the Prepared oration. Each student is allowed to present their speech on any aspect of the U.S. Constitution as their creativity takes them. Hopefully, each student will relate their views on aspects of a citizen's duties and obligations to our democracy as provided in the precepts of our Constitution, but they can pursue any aspect of what the Constitution says and how it relates to our society and American culture today. Complete freedom is given to students to offer thoughts on their knowledge and opinions, as inspired oral expression. Their timed speech must last at least eight (8) minutes and not exceed ten (10) minutes. The same subject and oration used in the three levels of the Department contest must be used in the National contest. The oration must bear a title.

The Assigned oration will be randomly drawn from a listing of four potential topics as described in this bulletin. The intent of the assigned topic is to test the speaker's subject knowledge and extent of research and creativity in making a convincing argument to support their convictions. The assigned speech must last for a minimum of three (3) minutes and not exceed five (5) minutes.

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In the prepared and /or assigned oration, quotations must always be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than ten words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases in a foreign language to establish a point. The greater majority of the prepared oration and assigned oration must be delivered in English. Singing is not permitted and will result in immediate disqualification. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song(s) provided proper attribution is made. A raised platform is not mandatory; however, it is strongly recommended. The use of notes, amplification, lectern or speaker's stand, or any manner of prompting is not permitted. Props are not permitted. *For a full review of Oratorical Contest Rules and Regulations go to: <http://www.legion.org/oratorical/rules>*

Eligibility

All contestants must be lawful permanent residents of the United States of America and bona fide students in secondary schools (public, parochial, military, private and home school programs), under the age of 20 years on the date of the National Finals Program, and whose academic curriculum is of public high school level, and enrolled in classes equivalent to regular 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades on January 1 of the year when the National programs are conducted. A 2026 Oratorical Contest application (enclosed, page 6) must be completed by each student and submitted to Department Headquarters no later than February 9, 2026 and endorsed by a school official as being accurate. Students should coordinate with their local American Legion Post to be sponsored.

Local to State Competitions

Districts

There are 10 American Legion Districts in Tennessee. District Chairmen are to conduct a District Oratorical Contest within their Districts between February 21, and March 21, 2026. Upon completion, each District Chairman certifies the winners and runners-up to Department Headquarters. The winner of the District competition advances to Division.

Division

Each of the three Grand Divisions of Tennessee, West, Central, East. Division competitions must be completed within the dates of March 28 through April 4, 2026. Upon completion, each Division Chairman certifies the winners and runners-up to Department Headquarters. The winner of each Division competition advances to the Department competition.

Department

The Department competition is scheduled for April 11, 2026, starting at 10:00 am at the American Legion State Headquarters, 318 Donelson Pike, Nashville, Tennessee. The winner of the Department competition advances to the National competition as a guest of the Department, along with one chaperone, and competes for the National contest held at Hillsdale College , Hillsdale, Michigan, over the weekend of May 15 -17, 2026, along with Department winners from all 50 states and four territories.

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Awards and National Competition

Students competing at the District level receive a \$25 travel expense reimbursement. Students competing at the Division level receive \$100 for finishing as the runner up or in the third position. The winner advances to Department and competes. Students competing at the Department are awarded a \$1,000 scholarship for third position, the runner up receives a \$2,000 scholarship, and the Department winner receives a \$3000 scholarship along with advancement to National competition in Hillsdale, Michigan. For 2026, National's scholarships are \$25,000 for the winner, \$22,500 for the runner-up, and \$20,000 for placing third. All other Department winners competing at the National competition receive no less than a \$2,000 scholarship competing in the quarter and semifinals.

Gina Harjani from Gatlinburg, Tennessee,



Gina received \$28,000 in scholarships between the State and National Competition.

2025 Department Winner and National Champion Gina Harjani

You can watch last year's competition and listen to all three of the top winners give their presentations at the 2025 National event. If you had other question about the contest, there are several links for you to explore as well at: [2025 American Legion National Oratorical Contest Finals](#)

Assigned Topics for 2026 Oratorical Contest

Amendment IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Article III

Section 3. Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

Article IV

Section 4. The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.

Article VI

Clause 3. The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

A Department of Tennessee and National Americanism Activity of The American Legion.
Your local American Legion Contact:

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

APPROVED BY:

The National Association of Secondary School Principals
Tennessee Department of Education
The Tennessee High School Association

THE AMERICAN LEGION



DEPARTMENT OF TENNESSEE

2026 ORATORICAL CONTEST APPLICATION AND CERTIFICATION BY SCHOOL OFFICIAL

PLEASE email APPLICATION/CERTIFICATION TO adjutant@tnlegion.org OR mail to
 THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF TENNESSEE
 ATTN: ORATORICAL PROGRAM
 318 DONELSON PIKE NASHVILLE TN 37214 BY FEBRUARY 9, 2026
 (ANY APPLICATION INCOMPLETE, OR RECEIVED AFTER THE CUTOFF DATE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED)

High School Information

School's Name, Address and County		School's Phone #	
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Student's Information

Student's Name:																
Current Grade:	9th	<input type="checkbox"/>			10th	<input type="checkbox"/>			11th	<input type="checkbox"/>			12th	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Student is a Citizen of the United States:	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>			No	<input type="checkbox"/>										
Home Address:																
City:					State:			Zip Code:								
Student's Phone #																
Student's Email																

Name of Parent or Parents

Father					Mother				
Address					Address				
Father's Phone #					Mother's Phone #				
Father's Email					Mother's Email				

Name of Teacher and/or Coach

Teacher or Coach																
Address																
Phone #																

American Legion Post Information

American Legion Post # and City					Post Officer's Name											
Parent Signature(s)																
Parent's Printed Name																
School Official's Signature																
School Official's Printed Name & Title																