

Scholarships

**TALK YOUR WAY
TO COLLEGE**



THE AMERICAN LEGION
Department of Mississippi

HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

“A Constitutional Speech Contest”

Scholarship Awards for Every Level

Mississippi Finalists: \$300 / \$200 / \$100 . . .

Post / District / Area: \$10min. / \$75 / \$150 . . .

National Finalists: \$25,000 / \$22,500 / \$20,000

Minimum \$2,000 for National Levels

State Final Contest at Raymond, MS March 29, 2025

National Finals at Hillsdale, MI May 16-18, 2025

Eligibility: Students in Grades 9 - 12

Home School / Public School / Private School / Parochial School

Register On-Line or Contact:

Oratorical Chairman Em. Joe Kersh

phone: 601-582-4616

403 South 19th Avenue

e-mail: rdmastr@comcast.net

Hattiesburg, MS 39401-7449

Go To: www.mslegionoratorical.weebly.com

For More Information Go To: www.legion.org/oratorical



THE AMERICAN LEGION
 DEPARTMENT of MISSISSIPPI
 JOE KERSH, ORATORICAL CH. EM.
 403 SOUTH 19th AVENUE
 HATTIESBURG, MS 39401-7749



September 7, 2024

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program
 "A Constitutional Speech Contest"

*** LETTER TO REGISTERED STUDENTS ***

Dear (First Name),

I have you registered to receive information about our Oratorical Contest this year. Please review your informaton on the back of this letter and let me know if I can correct anything. You may download the rules brochure for this year on the OFFICIAL RULES page of our website. I will notify the American Legion posts in your district, who should contact you when they schedule their post or entry level contest. If you are seriously interested in entering, please let me know and I will put you in touch with them. The deadline set for post level contests is February 10, 2025, however, extra time may be granted before your district contest date. You may enter more than one post level contest, but you may only enter through a post in the district in which you live or attend school. First and second place winners advance from each level to the next within the state, and whenever a winner at any level declines to advance, the next runner-up may advance. However, only the state champion or 1st runner-up can go to the national finals.

In addition to certificates and medals, the department level prizes are listed below:

Level:	Scholarship Awards		
	District	Area	State Final
1st Place	\$75	\$150	\$300
2nd Place	50	100	200
3rd Place	25	50	100
4th-6th Place	10	25	50

Post level prizes (not listed) are at the discretion of each post. Contestants must register and give both their prepared oration and an assigned topic speech to receive the prizes listed above. Please see the Official Rules brochure for the assigned topics and a complete discussion of the standards of conduct. The national level scholarship prizes are from \$2,000 to \$25,000.

The district level contest period begins February 11, 2025. The State Final Contest for Mississippi will be held Saturday, March 29, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. at the Eagle Ridge Conference Center at Hinds Community College in Raymond, Mississippi, with recognition and awards ceremonies after lunch provided for all. The state champion will represent Mississippi in the National Finals at Hillsdale College in Hillsdale, Michigan, May 16-18, 2025, and travel will be provided. You can watch video presentations and download more information at www.legion.org/oratorical. The National Final Contest will be web-cast live at 9:00 a.m. C.D.T. on Sunday, May 18 via www.legion.org/legiontv.

Wishing you the best of success, and please let me know if I can help you in any way.

Yours truly,

Joseph D. Kersh

Joseph D. Kersh
 Department Oratorical Chairman Emeritus
 phone: 601-582-4616
 e-mail: rdmastr@comcast.net
 website: www.mslegionoratorical.weebly.com

P.S. A preparation guide may be purchased at Constitution Speech Prep on Facebook not affiliated with The American Legion.

**THE AMERICAN LEGION
HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
"A Constitutional Speech Contest"**

☆ DEPARTMENT OF MISSISSIPPI ☆

☆ REGISTRATION FORM ☆

Contestant's Name: _____ Date: _____
(No Nicknames)

Telephone Number: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____
(Street)

(City) (State) (Zip)

Name of High School: _____ Grade in School: _____

School Contact Person: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ E-mail address: _____
(Street)

(City) (State) (Zip)

Title of Prepared Oration: _____

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sponsoring Post</u> Post No. _____</p> <p>Post Name: _____</p> <p>Commander: _____</p> <p>Add: _____ Phone: _____ (Street)</p> <p>_____ (City) (State) (Zip) Email: _____</p> <p>Contact Person: _____</p> <p>Add: _____ Phone: _____ (Street)</p> <p>_____ (City) (State) (Zip) Email: _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>To be completed by Contest Officials:</u></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Contest</u></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Date</u></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Standing</u></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><u>Awards</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Post No: _____</td> <td>_____</td> <td>_____</td> <td>\$ _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>District: _____</td> <td>_____</td> <td>_____</td> <td>\$ _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Area: _____</td> <td>_____</td> <td>_____</td> <td>\$ _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dept. Final: _____</td> <td>_____</td> <td>_____</td> <td>\$ _____</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">Total Scholarship Awards:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date: _____</td> <td>Ck# _____</td> <td colspan="2">G.T.\$ _____</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>Contest</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Standing</u>	<u>Awards</u>	Post No: _____	_____	_____	\$ _____	District: _____	_____	_____	\$ _____	Area: _____	_____	_____	\$ _____	Dept. Final: _____	_____	_____	\$ _____	Total Scholarship Awards:				Date: _____	Ck# _____	G.T.\$ _____	
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*Please forward
copies of all
registrants to:*

Joseph D. Kersh, Oratorical Chairman Emeritus
403 South 19th Avenue
Hattiesburg, MS 39401-7449

Phone: 601-582-4616
E-mail: rdmastr@comcast.net
(Rev. Aug. 8, 2022)

The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program
"A Constitutional Speech Contest"

September 7, 2024

Department of Mississippi Oratorical Chairmen's Report 2025

The 2025 Department of Mississippi State Final Oratorical Contest is scheduled for **Saturday, March 29, 2025**, at 10:00 a.m. at the Eagle Ridge Conference Center at Hinds Community College, Raymond, Miss., with recognition and awards ceremonies after lunch provided for all. Sound checks will begin at 8:35 a.m., followed by contestant orientation and judges briefing at 9:30.

Letters have been sent to the registered students and school contacts. Contact information for students will be mailed to posts with this year's program materials and updated by email throughout the contest season. School contact lists will be emailed upon request. Check out the resources at www.legion.org/oratorical/resources. Check with your local schools and schedule contest dates which are agreeable to the most interested participants.

Scholarship Awards

Contest Periods:

Level:	Post*	Dist.	Area	Dept.	Post Level	Now - Feb. 10, 2025
1st Place	\$50	\$75	\$150	\$300	District Level	Feb. 11 - Mar. 3, 2025
2nd Place	30	50	100	200	Area Level	Mar. 4 - 24, 2025
3rd Place	20	25	50	100	State Final	March 29, 2025
4th-6th Place	10	10	25	50		

*Post level prizes recommended, and the department level scholarship awards that Mississippi Delta Post 1776 can provide due to a continuing lack of bingo revenue. Posts should award their own prizes and present them at their contests, because the department level prizes shown above will not be sent out until after the State Final.

Post 1776 will provide certificates, pins, and medals for contestants and judges in all contests which take place at every level statewide. Patrick Henry oratory lapel pins will be awarded to contestants as post level medals as follows: gold to 1st place, silver to 2nd, and bronze to all others. New judges in department level contests will be presented Patrick Henry lapel pins as follows: bronze for district, silver for area, and gold for the State Final. The Department of Mississippi provides engraved plaques which are mailed to each of the State Finalists.

Students can register on our state website www.mslegionoratorical.weebly.com. All contestants must be registered and must give both their prepared oration and an assigned topic speech to be eligible to receive the department level scholarship awards listed above. To be fair and to prepare the contestants for higher levels of competition, abiding by the National Rules is the preferred standard at the district and area levels, and it is mandatory at the State Final. Students may enter more than one post level contest, but they may only enter through a post in the district in which they live or attend school. First and second place winners advance from each level to the next within the state, but only the state champion or 1st runner-up can go to the National Finals. Whenever a winner at any level declines to advance, the next runner-up may advance. Winner and runner-up awards from department level contests will not be changed due to subsequent sponsorship arrangements or competition. Contestants must also actually compete at, or above, a contest level to be eligible to receive prizes awarded by default or without any competition.

If there are only two contestants in a post or district, a contest is preferred and encouraged, but as these two contestants would automatically advance to the next level, they may forego the prior contest, and their relative standings in the next contest will be used to award their respective lower level scholarship awards. However, if there are three or more contestants at any level, then a contest is required to see which two contestants may advance.

A post level audition is an appointment made by any Legion member to register and identify students to sponsor. To encourage participation at the entry level, posts should offer the minimum \$10 Scholarship Award to any student who auditions for the post, whether any judging or ranking takes place, and whether the student advances or not. If they go on to compete at the district level or higher, they may be awarded the appropriately ranked post level prizes, such as 1st or 2nd place, instead of the \$10 audition award. Posts may cooperate in this effort or in having a formal post level contest with judges, etc., and any post in that district may sponsor one or two winners to the district level contest.

Please let us know when you schedule any contest, and let us help you by coordinating the communications with your contestants and judges, which helps us verify the information we need to print their certificates correctly. Districts and areas should work within or around the schedule above to determine the area winners by March 24, in time for the State Final Contest March 29. The National Finals are scheduled for May 16-18, 2025, at Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Mich., and the final contest will be web-cast live that Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. CDT via www.legion.org/legiontv.

Thanks to all of the dedicated Legion Family, this prestigious program is something we can enjoy and be proud of. And we thank all of our patrons who recognize the value of the oratorical contest to education in our nation. A wealth of rewards is truly deserved by the exceptional students who compete, and for the rest of us, the satisfaction of participating to produce the results is immeasurable!



Terence M. Polk, Commander, Post 1776
Department Oratorical Chairman
Joseph D. Kersh, PDC, Adjutant, Post 1776
Department Oratorical Chairman Emeritus
403 South 19th Avenue
Hattiesburg, MS 39401-7449

Note: Anyone can use the COMMENT feature on our website to contact us directly.

phone: 601-582-4616
e-mail: rdmastr@comcast.net
website: www.mslegionoratorical.weebly.com

P.S. Don't forget the hospitality!

JUDGE SELECTION GUIDELINES

The following is from the original "How To Conduct The High School Oratorical Contest" video made available by National in the late 1990's:

Dependable sources of judges include:

- Legal Profession – Judges and Attorneys
- Educators – Teachers and College Professors of speech, debate, and forensics or of constitutional law and government
- Media – Broadcast and Print Journalists
- Clergy

All judges should be selected on their personal merits as well as their chosen careers.

There should be a balance of men and women and ethnic backgrounds.

Perceived ability should take precedence over friendships or politics.

Be certain that your judging panel has had no contact or knowledge of contestants prior to the contest.

Be careful that the judges you pick have not judged one or more of your contestants in previous levels of competition, or in previous years of competition.

Legion members, if judging a contest, should not wear their Legion cap or regalia, and no undue attention should be brought to them.

Judges and contestants should be total strangers to each other. I use a judge database to track if judges have seen contestants in prior contests. Names and phone numbers or email addresses are all I need to contact judges to send them information about your contest (date, time & place) as well as instructional materials (scorecard, etc.), and to obtain the correct name and title for the Judge Certificates, which I also provide.

CONTEST SITE MANAGEMENT (Normal Times Before COVID-19)

Escort arriving judges to a private room away from the contestants and audience members to prevent their interaction prior to the contest. Access to restrooms should be planned, and a relaxing space with refreshments is a nice touch. Assign someone to tend to their needs. If a program revealing the participants' names has been printed, make sure the judges do not see it until after the contest is over and tabulated.

Briefing the judges by including a showing of the "Contest Judges Briefing" video is the best way. Judges should be seated in different locations (areas) in the contest room. Return the judges to the briefing room immediately after the last speech. Each judge shall render his/her decision without consultation with other judges or individuals. Using the tabulator program is the best way to check each scorecard before releasing each judge.

Judges shall refrain from discussing any phase of the contest or their judging methods with contestants, coaches, or others, except the contest moderator, following the contest. Moderators and tabulators are not permitted to divulge the judge's scorecard at the site of the contest. Persons interested in the scoring for professional reasons may, upon written request, be mailed at a later date, copies of the scores with the names of the judges omitted.