



United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit

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NEWS RELEASE

May 27, 2021

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Ninth Circuit Announces Civics Contest Finalists

SAN FRANCISCO – Preliminary judging of the essay and video entries has been completed in the 2021 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest for high school students in the western United States, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Over 700 students entered the contest despite challenges they confronted from transitioning to return to school to continuing their participation in online distance learning due to the coronavirus outbreak.

“The federal courts of the Ninth Circuit are steadfast in their commitment to civics education, reaching as many students as possible in the Western United States and in the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Many judges, administrators, court staff and members of the bar worked together to organize, promote, administer and judge the contest,” said U.S. District Judge Janis L. Sammartino of San Diego, chair of the Ninth Circuit’s Public Information and Community Outreach (PICO) Committee. “We acknowledge the students for their work and dedication to compete in the contest that hopefully gave them the opportunity to learn more about our nation’s legal system and constitutional democracy,” she added.

This year’s contest focused on important events in American history and global events that have challenged us to find a balance between inalienable rights and collective responsibilities to each other. Students were asked, “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?”

The contest was open to young people in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington state, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Students in grades 9-12 in public, private, parochial, charter schools and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status were invited to participate.

All 15 districts in the Ninth Circuit held local contests with district winners advancing to the circuit level for the final round of the circuit-wide competition. In all, 45 essays and 31 videos were selected to advance to the next round for consideration by judges, attorneys, court executives, court and library staff and the PICO Committee. PICO is responsible for organizing

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and sponsoring the contest together with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the federal district and bankruptcy courts under its jurisdiction.

In addition to cash prizes, previous first-place winners of the essay and video contest were invited to the annual Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference held in July. However, since the conference was cancelled for 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, cash awards were increased. A total of \$11,400 in cash prizes will be awarded to the top three finishers in both the essay and video competitions. The winners will receive – \$3,000 for first place, \$1,700 for second place and \$1,000 for third place along with a commemorative prize. If the winners of the video portion of the competition are part of a team, then they will split the total cash prize. Winners will be announced on the civics contest website <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest/> in late June. Finalists in each district are listed in the following pages.

The Ninth Circuit includes the states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

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Civics Contest Finalists

Finalists are the winners of local civics contests sponsored by the federal courts in the Ninth Circuit which offered cash prizes and/or certificates for the top three finishers in the essay competition and the video competition. Below are the winners in each district:

District of Alaska

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Yule Zhang of South Anchorage High School; second place (\$500) – Lillian Yang of West Anchorage High School; and third place (\$250) – Libbey Gionet of Grace Christian School.

District of Arizona

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Hannah Cluroe of Hamilton High School in Chandler; second place (\$500) – Amiya Lotun of BASIS Oro Valley in Oro Valley; and third place (\$250) – Ian Sherwood of Dobson Montessori School in Mesa.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$1,000) – the team of Marc Garba and Jiatian Yin of Desert Mountain High School in Scottsdale; second place (\$500) – Juan Carrasco of Mesa High School in Mesa; and third place (\$250) – Karina Lamadrid of Cesar Chavez High School in Phoenix.

Central District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Nefertari Hammant of Magnolia Student Center-Springs Charter School in Riverside; second place (\$750) – Laura Pham of Oxford Academy in Cypress; and third place (\$500) – Grace Yue, also of Oxford Academy.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Ariana Perez of Troy High School in Fullerton; second place (Total of \$750) – the team of Simone Chan, Yixi Chen and Shihui Huang of Arcadia High School in Arcadia; and third place (\$500) – Viren Mehta of Oxford Academy in Cypress.

Eastern District of California

Essay Winners: First place – Elizabeth Pena of Chico High School in Chico; second place – Jamie Casden of Benicia High School in Benicia; and third place – Avalon Keene, also of Benicia High School.

Northern District of California (not ranked)

Essay Winners: Aditya Dawar of Amador Valley High School in Pleasanton; Madeline Day, also of Amador Valley High School; and Kevin Guo of Cupertino High School in Cupertino. Each student will receive \$600.

Video Winners: The team of Lauren Bausley and Ella Kopper of Northgate High School in Walnut Creek and the team of Myung Suh Choi, Juno Kim and Katherine Lee of Monte Vista High School in Cupertino. Each team will receive a total of \$600.

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Southern District of California

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Noah Trepanier of Del Norte High School in San Diego; second place (\$500) – Gillian Celis of Eastlake High School in Chula Vista; and third place (\$250) – Azúl Del Castillo of High Tech High Chula Vista Charter School in Chula Vista.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Ali Hussain of Central Union High School in Imperial; second place (\$500) – Sebastian Avila, also of Central Union High School; and third place (Total of \$250) – the team of Jeremy Byrd and Taylor Rickert of Foothills Christian High School in El Cajon.

District of Guam

Essay Winners: First place (\$150) – Jin Chung of St. John’s School in Tumon; second place (\$100) – Kasey Xu, also of St. John’s School; and third place (\$50) – Azía Pilar of the Academy of Our Lady of Guam in Hagåtña.

Video Winners: First place (Total of \$100) – the team of Elizabeth Chua, Jin Chung and Alexander Gayle of St. John’s School and second place (\$50) – Kelvin Lee, also of St. John’s School.

District of Hawaii

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Abby Suk of 'Iolani School in Honolulu; second place (\$500) – John Vierra, also of 'Iolani School; and third place (\$250) – Bella Dadzie of West Hawaii Explorations Academy in Kailua-Kona.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Teah Simon of 'Iolani School in Honolulu; second place (Total of \$500) – the team of Moana Chun-Rivas and Logan Doi of Henry J. Kaiser High School in Honolulu; and third place (\$250) – Peilin Sun, also of Henry J. Kaiser High School.

District of Idaho

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – James Giffen of Timberline High School in Boise; second place (\$500) – Austin Giffen of East Junior High School in Boise; and third place (\$250) – Charlotte Brockman of Gooding High School in Gooding.

Video Winner: First place (\$1,000) – Austin Giffen of East Junior High School.

District of Montana

Essay Winners: First place (\$2,000) – Leah Veress of Gardiner High School in Gardiner; second place (\$1,000) – Landen Conner of Corvallis High School in Corvallis; and third place (\$500) – Frances Carrasco, also of Corvallis High School.

Video Winners: First place (\$2,000) – Brenden Bird, second place (\$1,000) – Josie Arganbright and third place (\$500) – William Ullery. All students are from Fort Benton High School in Fort Benton.



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District of Nevada

Essay Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Hridika Khundkar, second place (\$750) – Amanda Gant and third place (\$500) – Shannon Bradley. All students are from Reno High School in Reno.

Video Winners: First place (\$1,000) – Matthew Vogel of Advanced Technologies Academy in Las Vegas and second place (\$750) – Sahi Chundu of Ed W. Clark High School in Las Vegas.

District of the Northern Mariana Islands

Essay Winners: First place – Katherine Avendano-Woodruff of Mount Carmel School in Saipan; second place – Richard Steele, also of Mount Carmel School; and third place – Vivien Liu of Marianas High School in Saipan.

Video Winners: First place – The team of Katherine Avendano-Woodruff, Brandee Hunter and Connie Zhu of Mount Carmel School.

District of Oregon

Local winners in the District of Oregon will receive cash prizes to be determined by the district.

Essay Winners: First place – Kate Bingham of Lincoln High School in Portland; second place – Yixian Liu, also of Lincoln High School; and third place – Brandon Sa of Clackamas High School in Clackamas.

Video Winners: First place – The team of Bailey Armstrong, Tara Subramaniam and Nora Wu of Lincoln High School in Portland and second place – Peyton Coleman of Beaverton High School in Beaverton.

Eastern District of Washington

Essay Winners: First place – Lauryn Kunkel of Deer Park High School in Deer Park; second place – Taylor Voelker of East Valley High School in Spokane Valley; and third place – Natalie McQuade of Delta High School in Pasco.

Video Winners: First place – Bryan Cook of Garfield-Palouse High School in Palouse; second place – the team of Alexandria Pereira and Anika Walter of Delta High School in Pasco; and third place – the team of Megan Foertsch, Lauren Green and Jordan Holso of College Place High School in College Place.

Western District of Washington

Essay Winners: First place (\$800) – Isabella Widrow of Olympia High School in Olympia; second place (\$500) – Matthew Gardiner of Shorecrest High School in Shoreline; and third place (\$300) – Sophia Calandrillo of Shorewood High School in Shoreline.

Video Winners: First place (\$800) – Sophia Calandrillo of Shorewood High School in Shoreline; second place (\$500) – Jeremy Ryoo of Bothell High School in Bothell; and third place (\$300) – Mary Vertetis of Bellarmine Preparatory in Tacoma.

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