



Oratorical Contest

Area/ District/ Post Manual

2025-2026



THE AMERICAN LEGION

For God and Country

To: Post, District, and Area Oratorical Chairs

From: Doug Hockenberry, Department Oratorical Chair

Subject: 2025-2026 Oratorical Program

Thank you all for accepting the chairmanship and duties that are part of being involved in the High School Oratorical Contest. Many of you have some experience and know what an inspiring effort this is and to those that are new, I can tell you that the more you talk to other chairs, the more you will enjoy the experience.

This manual was developed to provide you with the necessary tools to promote and conduct a successful contest. For a new person, it can seem daunting, especially trying to figure out how to break a three-way tie. We have tried to keep the manual organized and easy for you to find the answers you need, but always feel free to call, text or email me with a question. When I first became a chair, I was calling the former chair DURING a contest because we had an issue that was not covered in the manual and I did not know what to do.

Attending a contest is the very best way to learn and I encourage you to find a Post or District near you where you can see a contest in action. I also suggest you do a dry run of a contest on your own, reading through the entire script and getting your friends or family to be actors so you can figure out where you want them to stand or walk and where the flag will be and when they will salute. A little practice goes a long way towards giving a more polished contest.

Thanks again for taking on this position!

Doug Hockenberry, Department Oratorical Chair
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2025-2026 ORATORICAL CHAIRS

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2nd District	Roxann Dressel	District2@legionmail.org	850-491-5625
3rd District			
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14th District			
15th District			
16th District			
17th District	Jim Bowers	District17@legionmail.org	407-484-6020

Areas:

Central - Districts 7, 15, 16

Eastern - Districts 6, 12

Northern - Districts 3, 4, 5, 17

Southern - Districts 9, 11, 14

Southwestern - Districts 8, 13

Western - District 1, 2

Districts:

1 – Bay, Escambia, Holmes, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton and Washington

2 – Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Jackson, Leon, Liberty and Wakulla

3 – Baker, Columbia, Dixie, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Madison, Suwannee and Taylor

4 – Alachua, Bradford, Citrus, Gilchrist, Levy, Marion and Union

5 – Clay, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns

6 – Lake, Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Sumter

7 – Polk County & that portion of Pasco County East of Hwy 75 (The American Legion Highway)

8 – Sarasota, Manatee, Highlands, DeSoto and Hardee, and to include Post 113 Rotonda West

9 – Broward County

11 – Palm Beach, Okeechobee and Clewiston from Hendry County, Indiantown from Martin County and that part of Martin County south of the St. Lucie River

12 – Brevard, Indian River, Martin (except Indiantown and that part of Martin County south of the St. Lucie River) and St. Lucie

13 – Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry (except Clewiston) and Lee, except Post 113 Rotonda West

14 – Dade and Monroe

15 – Hillsborough County, that portion of Pasco County, except New Port Richey, Hudson, Holiday and Seven Springs West of Interstate 75, (The American Legion Highway), and all of Hernando County

16 – Pinellas County and New Port Richey, Hudson, Holiday and Seven Springs from West Pasco County

17 – Flagler, Putnam, and Volusia

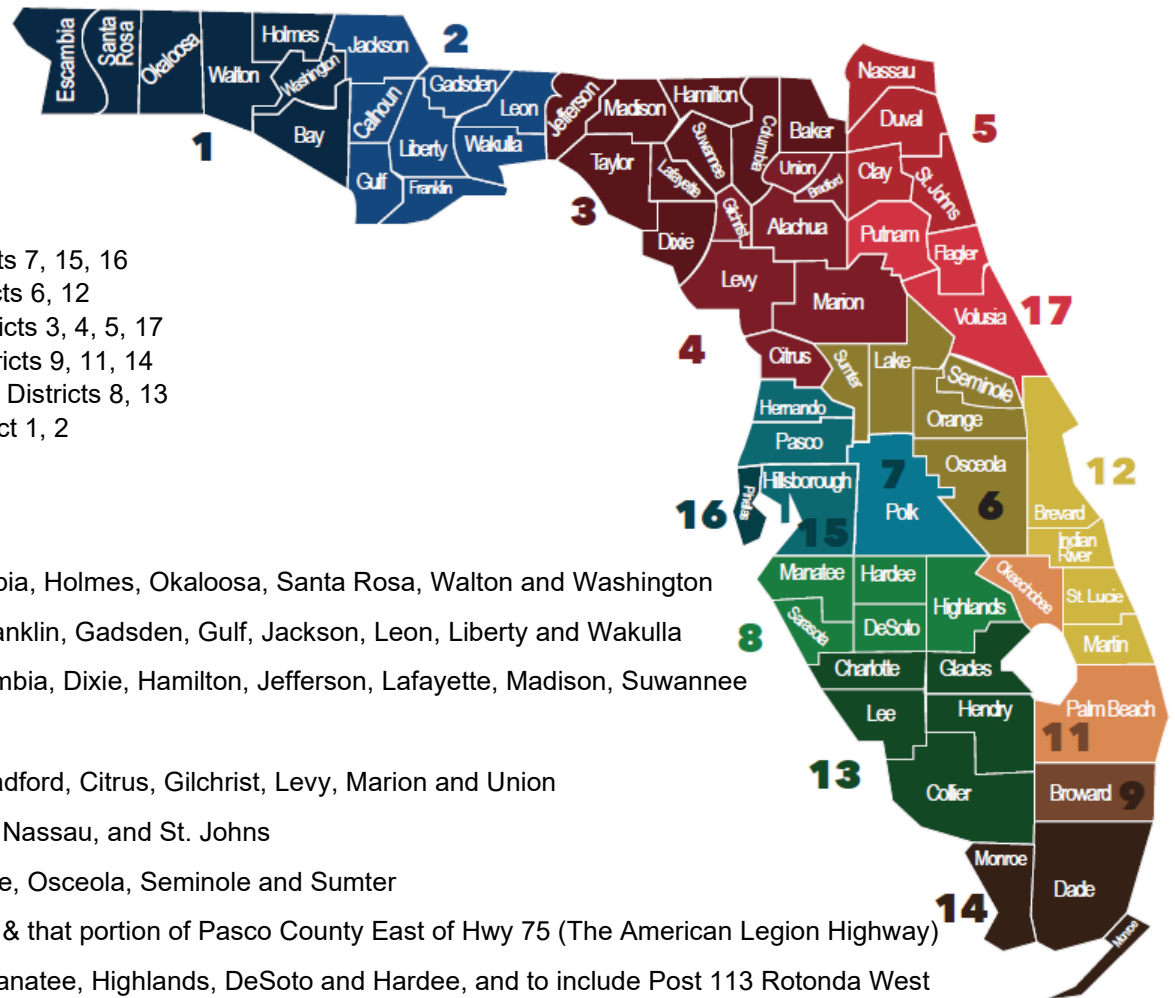


Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Contest Dates/Awards	6-7
2026 Assigned Topics	8-9
What Contestants Need to Prepare	10
<i>Prepared Oration</i>	10
<i>Assigned Topics</i>	10
Contestant Eligibility/Attire	11
Appropriate Contest Venues	11-12
Television & Radio	12
Media Release Form	13
Sample Cover Sheet	14
Certification Form	15-16
Chair's Survey Sheet	17
Contest Officials	18-20
Policy Statements	21-22
Chair's Checklist	23-27
Required Script	28-36
Judges Instructions	37
Suggestion to the Judges	38-39
Judge's Score Card	40-41
Judge's Worksheet (Prepared Oration)	42
Judge's Worksheet (Assigned Topics)	43
Tabulator Instructions	44
Tabulation Card	45
Timekeeper Instructions	46
Timekeeper Record Card	47
Promote your Contest	48-49
Mistakes to Learn From	49-50
Inspiration and Resources for Students	50-52
Public Service Announcement	53
Invitation to Compete	54
Sample Invitation to Judge Letter	55

INTRODUCTION

This manual has been developed to assist the Oratorical Chair in organizing and conducting a successful Oratorical Contest at the Post, District, and Area levels. Oratorical Chairs should keep in mind that all arrangements for contests leading to the Department of Florida Finals are the responsibility of each level's chair. This manual is offered as an aid, and Chairs should be familiar with the rules and information contained therein.

Even with the best of planning, mistakes can be made. I've attending contests at all levels, including Nationals, where the moderator read the finalists in the wrong order or had switched the runner up with the first-place winner. Certainly, adequate preparation helps avoid mistakes but if something goes awry, a good recovery is essential in minimizing damage. The students have worked very hard to prepare their speeches and compete and we aim to give them the best possible contest and opportunity.

This year for the first time in decades, the award amounts were increased and provided even more incentive for students to participate. As a Chair, you have to provide the initiative to get the students interested and ready to compete. Delegate when you can and work smarter, not harder by using technology to reach more people. Ask questions and ask for help or advice along the way. Our Department in Orlando is incredibly talented and willing to help so take advantage of that. We are all in this together for the enrichment of the students.

ORATORICAL CONTEST DATES AND AWARDS

DEPARTMENT CONTEST DATES

	All contests must occur during this time frame
Post Level	December 1, 2025 - January 18, 2026
District Level	January 19, 2026- February 8, 2026
Area Level	February 9, 2026 – February 22, 2026
Department Finals	March 14, 2026

DEPARTMENT CONTEST AWARDS

The awards listed below will be made at the Department level and awarded to the winners respectively. Travel and hotel accommodations will be paid by the Department of Florida for the contestants and chaperons to attend the Department Finals.

First Place	\$2,500.00
Second Place	\$1,500.00
Third Place	\$1,000.00
Fourth Place	\$500
Fifth Place	\$500
Sixth Place	\$500

Each Area contestant who participates in first round but does not advance to the Department Finals will receive a \$100.00 scholarship from the American Legion, Department of Florida. It is the Area Chair's responsibility to send the runner-up contestant information to Department, so the participant can receive the \$100.00 scholarship. Department does not issue a prize check to the Area winner.

POST/DISTRICT/AREA CONTEST DATES

Post contest completed by January 18, 2026
District contest completed by February 08, 2026
Area contest completed by February 22, 2026

RECOMMENDED POST, DISTRICT, AND AREA AWARDS

We strongly recommend that cash scholarship prizes are presented to the contestants at each contest level since these students put in a lot of time and effort into preparing speeches and participating in this contest. Here are our recommended scholarship prizes:

	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place
Post Level	\$75.00	\$50.00	\$25.00
District Level	\$100.00	\$75.00	\$50.00
Area Level	\$125.00	\$100.00	\$75.00

NATIONAL CONTEST DATES

The 2026 National Finals will be May 15-17th in Hillsdale, MI at Hillsdale, MI. Quarterfinals and semifinal contests are scheduled for Saturday, May 16th, with the finals scheduled for Sunday, May 17th.

Quarter-Final Round	May 16, 2026
Semi-Final Round	May 16, 2026
National Finals	May 17, 2026

All contestants and chaperones will arrive the Friday of the contest weekend. All contestants and chaperones will stay at the official contest hotel.

A mandatory pre-contest orientation session for all contestants will take place Friday evening of the contest weekend. A banquet honoring all contestants will be Sunday afternoon, following the National Championship contest. All contestants and chaperones will depart for home later that afternoon.

Travel and hotel accommodations will be paid by the National Organization for each contestant and one chaperone to attend the National Contest. More detailed information can be found at www.legion.org/oratorical.

NATIONAL CONTEST AWARDS

First Place	\$25,000.00
Second Place	\$22,500.00
Third Place	\$20,000.00

Contestants who participate in the National Quarter-Final round competition receive \$2,000.00. Contestants who participate in the National Semi-Final round competition receive an additional \$2,000.00, except the winner who advances to the National Finals.

ASSIGNED TOPICS FOR 2025-2026 ORATORICAL CONTEST

Amendment 4

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 3, 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 the 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 attained.

Article 4, 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 6, 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.

WHAT DO THE CONTESTANTS PREPARE?

The Prepared Oration

The prepared oration must be on some **aspect of the Constitution of the United States with emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government.** The same subject and oration used in the Department contest must be used in the National contest. The prepared oration must be the original effort of each contestant and must not take up less than eight minutes or more than 10 minutes for delivery. This aspect of the Constitution is the choice of the contestant but should have a strong emphasis on the obligations of a citizen to their government.

The Prepared Oration must be delivered in the English language. Contestants may have a hard copy of their oration in the first holding room to study but must give the copy to the escort when exiting the room to give their Prepared Oration. Cell phones or tablets are not allowed. In the prepared oration, as well as in the assigned topic discourse, quotations must be indicated as such.

Where quotations are more than 10 words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally. Signing is not allowed and will result in immediate disqualification. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song, provided proper attribution is made.

A hard copy of the Prepared Oration should be given to your Oratorical Chair on the day of the contest. The Prepared Oration you give should remain largely the same at each level of the contest though minor changes are allowed.

The Assigned Topics

The assigned topic discourse may last between three and five minutes for delivery. The purpose of the assigned topic discourse is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of his or her research, and the ability to discuss the topic as related to the basic principles of government under the Constitution. The assigned topic shall be drawn by the contest official in full view of the audience immediately before the last speaker begins delivery of his/her prepared oration and will be made known to the audience and each contestant approximately five minutes prior to the time of delivery. The topic will be on some aspect of the Constitution of the United States as listed under assigned topics at www.legion.org/oratorical/topics.

All contestants at each contest level are required to speak in the English language on the same assigned topic. It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases of a foreign language into the prepared oration and/or assigned topic in order to develop the argument, establish a point, etc. It is to be understood that the vast majority of the prepared oration and/or assigned topic must still be delivered in the English language.

CONTESTANT ELIGIBILITY

Eligible participants in The American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest shall be citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States.

All contestants must be bona fide students herein described as any student under the age of twenty (20) years on the date of the National Contest who is presently enrolled in a high school or junior high school (public, parochial, military, private or state accredited home school), in which the curriculum is considered to be of high school level, commencing with grade nine (9) and terminated with grade twelve (12). Students must be enrolled in high school or junior high school during the time of participation at any level of The American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest. Further, to participate in the Florida Contest, students must be residents of the State of Florida. Students whose parents are legal residents of another state must participate in that state.

CONTEST ATTIRE

- Appropriate business attire is required for all contestants.
- Uniforms are NOT permitted.
- Contestants cannot wear awards, medals or ribbons from previous competitions or from other clubs or organizations.

APPROPRIATE CONTEST VENUES

It is important that each contest is held in appropriate location that is family friendly. You can host your Oratorical Contest at your local Post, a library, or a local school. A contest may not be hosted in a cigarette/cigar or smoke-filled environment or at or near a bar. Your audience members are students and parents and we strive to give them a setting that is healthy, comfortable and welcoming.

If you want to host your contest at the Post and the room has a bar, the bar must be closed until all students and parents have left the premises. Alcohol cannot be served during the contest or while students and parents are present. If students have to walk through the bar area to reach the presentation or holding room then the bar must be closed for business until the contest is over.

The Department encourages you to host your contest at a public place as it will naturally draw more attention to the contest. Also, when 50 American Legion members show up with hats and uniforms to watch a contest, it shows the community more about who we are and what we do. If you have a contest at the Post, it does little to advance public awareness about the contest and The American Legion. Rural communities have fewer options, but we do encourage you to be creative. If you want help finding a suitable venue, please email me.

If your venue has a raised platform for the contestants to stand on, that is ideal. It is recommended but optional. If there is no platform, consider marking off an area on a stage or floor so that all students stay within the marked area.

Suggestions for Contest Venues

Schools	Garden Clubs
Community Colleges	Community Theaters
Museums	Civil Clubs
Historical Settings	Certain Military Installations
Community Centers	National Guard Units
Senior Centers	Armories
Public Libraries	Arboretums
Zoos	Women's Centers
Botanical Gardens	

Not allowed – motels, hotels, churches, temples, synagogues or other places of worship. No place that allows smoking or serves alcohol during the time students are on the premises.

TELEVISION & RADIO

Live television and radio broadcasts are permitted in all contests, as well as taping or other types of media for later showing, provided: 1) the lighting and other site conditions are the same for all contestants; 2) the taping or broadcasts shall in no way distract contestants or interfere with the pre-announced scheduled time of the contest; 3) the normal speaking voice of the contestant is not interfered with or amplified within the auditorium; and 4) The American Legion, Department of Florida is in no way financially obligated to assist; 5) all contestants and their Parent/Guardian must fill out a Media Release form giving consent to being filmed/recorded. If a contest is recorded, it cannot be disseminated until after that National contest is completed.

Parents and audience members are NOT allowed to tape or record any contest at any level, including recording their own child. Live television and radio broadcasts refer to professional and/or commercial companies.

MEDIA RELEASE

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENT OR GUARDIAN:

I/We understand that as part of our child's participation in The American Legion, Department of Florida Oratorical Contest, photos, videos, and quotations may be taken for use in publications and reports about the program. We further understand that members of the news media invited to cover the program may take photos, videos and quotations. We grant permission to use such materials for the promotion of the program.

I/We grant permission to The American Legion, Department of Florida and its subordinates, to use names and/or photographs for use in The American Legion publications such as recruiting brochures, newsletters, and magazines, and to use names and/or photographs on display boards, and to use names and/or photographs in electronic versions of the same publications or on The American Legion, Department of Florida web site or other electronic forms or media.

I/We hereby agree to release, defend, and hold harmless The American Legion Department of Florida and subordinates, including any firm publishing and/or distributing the finished product in whole or in part, whether on paper or via electronic media, from and against any claims, damages or liability arising from or related to the use of the photographs, including, but not limited to, any misuse, distortion, blurring, alteration, optical illusion or use in composite form, either intentionally or otherwise, that may occur or be produced in taking, processing, reduction or production of the finished product, its publication or distribution.

I/We (print full name(s) _____) am/are the parent or legal guardian of the child named below. I/We have read this release before signing below, and fully understand the contests, meaning and impact of this release.

Printed full name of contestant	
Signature of parent or guardian & date	
Email of Parent or Guardian	
Phone number of Parent or Guardian	

SAMPLE COVER SHEET FOR ORATION

**THE AMERICAN LEGION
2025-2026 NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL
ORATORICAL CONTEST**

"Title of your Prepared Oration"

Your full name, complete street address to include
city, state and zip code.

Participants will need to bring a hard copy of their Prepared Oration to each
contest they participate in.

DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

**HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTEST
2025-2026 CERTIFICATION FORM**

ALL OTHER FORMS ARE OBSOLETE AND WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

**THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
OTHER SECTIONS TO BE COMPLETED BY THEIR RESPECTIVE
AMERICAN LEGION ORATORICAL CHAIRS**

This is to certify that (contestant full name)_____ is a student at
_____ (name of school) located in (name of city)
_____ and is not undergoing post-graduate work, is
not deficient in any school work for the current year, and was enrolled in this school as of
December 31, 2025.

Contestant's Full Printed Name	
Contestants Physical Street Address	
Contestant's City and Zip Code	
Contestant's Phone Number	
Contestant's Email	
Parent or Guardian Printed Full Name	
Parent or Guardian Phone Number	
Parent or Guardian Email	
Principal Full Name Printed	
Principal Signature & Date	

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY
POST CHAIR
AND MAILED TO DISTRICT CHAIR

I, _____, Oratorical Chair of Post # _____ of The American Legion Department of Florida, do hereby certify that _____ was declared by the Judges to be the winner of this 2025-2026 Post Contest, and is eligible to represent this Post in the District Contest.

ATTEST:

SIGNED:

Post Commander

Post Chair

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY
DISTRICT CHAIR
AND MAILED TO AREA CHAIR

I, _____, Oratorical Chair of District # _____ of The American Legion Department of Florida, do hereby certify that _____ was declared by the Judges to be the winner of this 2025-2026 District Contest, and is eligible to represent this District in the Area Contest.

ATTEST:

SIGNED:

District Commander

District Chair

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY
AREA CHAIR
AND MAILED TO DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS DIRECTOR

I, _____, Oratorical Chair of the _____ Area of The American Legion Department of Florida, do hereby certify that _____ was declared by the Judges to be the winner of this 2025-2026 Area Contest, and is eligible to represent this Area in the Department Contest.

ATTEST:

SIGNED:

Area Commander

Area Chair

2025-2026 DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA

POST/DISTRICT/AREA CHAIR'S CONTEST SURVEY SHEET

Must be completed and forwarded to Department Headquarters in the envelope provided, to be eligible for the Department contest.

Chair's Name and Post #, District #, or Area:

Date/Time/Location of Contest:

Number of Legionnaire's attending the contest:

Number of other guests:

Number of contestants:

Number of schools participating:

Name of Contestant	Name of School	Prize/Award
1 st Place		
2 nd Place		
3 rd Place		
4 th Place		
5 th Place		
6 th Place		

Chairs: Please fill out this form and forward to Department Headquarters along with a copy of the Certification Form in the envelope provided.

CONTEST OFFICIALS

JUDGES

The most important task in staging a successful Oratorical Contest is the appointment of qualified and impartial contest officials. Judges are an integral part of the contest and their qualifications should be considered carefully, as their decision is final and must be reached without bias.

Post, District, and Area Contests are required to have at least three (3) Judges at the contest. The Department Finals requires five (5) Judges.

For the Post, District, and Area Contest you **can** have more than three Judges and is recommended. However, it is recommended that you have an odd number of Judges to minimize the risk of a tie. It is recommended that you plan to have at least one alternate or back up Judge in case a Judge does not attend the contest or is disqualified for some other reason, during the contest.

- ☐ The selection of Judges will not be delegated to anyone and will be the responsibility of the Oratorical Chair.
- ☐ No publicity shall be given to the names of the Judges in advance of the contest.
- ☐ During the contest, the Judges will be seated in different locations in the auditorium, and each Judge will render his final decision without consultation with other Judges or any other person.
- ☐ Judges should not know the student or parents of the student. In small towns or rural areas, you might have to broaden your search to neighboring counties to find judges who do not know the students or parents and to ensure impartiality.
- ☐ Only one judge from an organization or company is allowed (i.e., you cannot have two judges from the same law firm or two judges from the same police department).
- ☐ Your panel of Judges should be diverse, representing both genders, people from all ages, races, religions, and ethnicities.
- ☐ Judges can be disqualified during a contest for nodding off, for talking on their phone or texting. They can be disqualified for leaving during a speech, such as to use the restroom or to take a phone call.
- ☐ Judges should be impartial and not let age, race, sex, creed, national origin or religion interfere with their ability to score Contestants fairly.

- ❑ The Contest Moderator will meet with the Judges prior to the contest to ensure they are familiar with the rules, the scorecards, and procedures.
- ❑ Legionnaire's will not be selected as Judges unless other qualified Judges cannot be found. Legionnaires should not be in uniform or wear their Legion cap if they need to judge a contest.

People in these fields often make good Judges:

High School Teachers	College Professors
Journalists	Attorneys
Business Leaders	Community Leaders
Politicians	Clergy and Religious Leaders
Toastmasters Clubs	Historians
City, County, State Government Officials	Forensic Coaches or Judges
High School Principals/Superintendents	School Board Members
Former Oratorical Contestants	Philanthropists
TV New Anchors and Reporters	Law School Professors
TED Speakers or Fellows	College Student Leaders
Military Members	Public Affairs People
FBI Agents/FDLE Agents	High Ranking Law Enforcement Officers
Florida Department of Education Officials	Attorney General
Bar Association Members	Local Leadership Programs
Chamber of Commerce Members	
Small Business Leaders of the Year Recipients	

BARRIERS TO IMPARTIAL JUDGING

First or Last Speaker is Best

We tend to remember first and last speakers best, so they have an advantage over other speakers. The first speaker because he or she becomes a reference point and the last because they are more easily remembered. As a judge we need to be equally attentive to the middle speakers.

Prejudices and Personal Preferences

Tastes, beliefs, preferences, and prejudices are the most prevalent barriers to unbiased judging. Try to remember to judge not what the speaker is or appears to be, but what the speaker is saying.

Underdog Effect

Resist the temptation to mark highly because you feel a speaker deserves to win. Use the judging form scrupulously.

Halo Effect

Rest giving high marks because the speaker dresses well or has a dynamic delivery. Some speakers may look very polished and are given high marks even if they don't speak well.

Reverse Halo Effect

The Reverse Halo Effect happens when a Contestant is judged to have a single undesirable trait, and is marked down in other, unrelated areas. Don't allow one weak trait to influence your perception of the person's speech as a whole.

Not the Norm

Outside of the Oratorical Contest Rules, there is no "norm" for speakers. As a judge, consider what is usually the norm for a good speech. Ask yourself if you expect everyone to fit into that norm. If so, you may be out of step and not impartial.

TABULATORS

Each contest should have **at least two (2) Tabulators** whose job it will be to make certain that the Judges have fully tabulated and signed the scorecards before submitting them for final tabulation. Tabulators should be experienced in tabulating using the online tabulation process.

TIMERKEEPERS

Each contest should have two (2) Timekeepers, whose job is to time each oration. They should have knowledge of how to read a stopwatch. Equipment needed is stopwatches, time cards and pencils.

POLICY STATEMENTS

The following policies are set forth by the Oratorical Committee. These policies are in effect and shall be adhered to for all contests held in the state of Florida.

1. The National High School Oratorical Contest rules prevail unless stated differently in the Department of Florida policy statement.
2. Any qualified student who is a permanent resident of the state of Florida may enter the Oratorical Contest provided that he or she is **sponsored by a Legion Post**.
3. Contests can have no more than 6 contestants. If your contest has more than 6 contestants, you will need to divide your contest into two days to accommodate all of the contestants. If you have two contests, you must have two sets of judges as a judge can only judge one contest at any level.
4. Certification of winners must be processed and forwarded to the next higher level immediately following the respective Contest. These forms may be hand delivered or sent by mail, but each Chair should keep a copy of the forms and send the original to the next level. A copy of the certification must also be forwarded to the Department Programs Director.
5. Once a contestant enters the contest at the Post level, he/she may not participate in any other Post contest. For example: If Suzie is sponsored by Post 1 and does not win the Post Contest, she is ineligible to participate in another Post's contest.
6. A representative of the Post sponsoring a contestant will accompany the contestant at each level of competition.
7. At all levels, the contest time shall be given consideration in relationship to the distance the contestants must travel.
8. There shall be a minimum of three judges for any level contest below the state finals.
9. Discretion shall be used when selecting Judges. People in education, forensics or debate, lawyers, judges, Toastmasters, and other familiar with speaking and the Constitution are excellent choices. It is highly recommended to have only one judge from each business or organization. For further clarification or recommendations, contact the Department Chair.
10. It is recommended that Legionnaires not be used as judges. However, if it is necessary to use a Legionnaire as a judge, he or she shall not be in uniform and not wearing an American Legion cap or hat.
11. Prompting by parent, judges or audience members will result in immediate disqualification of a contestant.
12. Props of any kind will not be allowed.

13. No contest below the State level will be held in a hotel/motel. All contests should be held in local Posts, high schools, or other appropriate facilities. Suggested venues are listed in the manual under the topic Appropriate Venues.

14. The script shall be followed exactly as written so that each contestant will have experienced the contest as it will be conducted at both the State Finals and National levels. If you wish to make a custom introduction or conclusion you may, but once your contest starts, you must follow the script exactly as written.

15. Contests with only one contestant shall be conducted under regular contest conditions and rules to give the contestant an opportunity to experience the contest in full. Judging is not required but may be performed at the chair's discretion.

16. For volunteers working directly with students, a local background check is recommended but not required. However, at no time shall a volunteer, Legionnaire or Oratorical committee member be alone with a student. This is particularly important for escorts in the holding rooms or escorting students to the restrooms. Also, at no time shall a Legionnaire touch a student, except to shake hands. There should be no hugging or putting an arm around a student's shoulder or waist before, during or after the contest, including photographs. We expect our Legion members to be above reproach when dealing with students who are typically minors or very young adults. If a background check is completed, it is at your own expense.

17. The Department Chair's trip to National will be paid for out of the annual Oratorical budget to include travel, hotel stay and per diem.

18. A Post is not required to hold an Oratorical Contest. Many Posts don't have a Chair and have other obstacles to holding a contest, such as lack of participants. However, it's conceivable that the National office could send a qualified lead to an area where there will simply be no Post Contest. Department will try to find a Post in the same District that can sponsor the contestant. The contestant should have an opportunity to give their oration in a setting similar to a regular contest setting, if they want it. Some students are confident and experienced public speakers and may not want or feel they need the practice.

19. Any challenge to the scores, the qualifications or selection of judges, or how a contest is held (i.e., issues with the contest) must be made within 48 hours of the contest either by letter or email to Department Programs Director Bekki Boarman.

CHECKLIST FOR AN ORATORICAL CONTEST

BEFORE CONTEST DAY

September

- ☐ Begin contacting schools, teachers and trying to get students interested in participating.
- ☐ Choose Post Chair or other volunteers to help.

October

- ☐ Choose your venue making sure it's open on the date and time you want to have your contest. Make sure your contest date falls within the dates given on page 6 of the manual.
- ☐ Choose a venue that has adequate parking for the audience, has space to hold the number of audience members you expect to attend. Your venue should have the main presentation area where the contestants speak and two separate holding rooms or areas where the students cannot hear as other contestants give their speech. You should confirm a venue even if you have no contestants early on. Many students will come in late in the year to participate and there is no deadline for them to enter. The National office sends us leads that come in through the National website and many of those are very qualified students.
- ☐ Notify the Department of the date and time so they can promote it on social media and update the Department website.
- ☐ Send a notice to your local newspaper, radio and TV station to let them know about the contest. Notify schools about the dates, even if you have no students from that school as it's a way to drive up interest for the following year's contest. You can use the **Invitation to Compete** as a guide of what to give your news outlets or write your own. This Invitation is attached at the end of the manual.
- ☐ Once you have the venue and date, then begin to choose your judges. They need to know the date and time of the contest before they can commit to judging. At the end of this manual is a sample letter to prospective Judges you can use as guide.
- ☐ Notify and invite other volunteers as needed. It is advisable to have at least one female escort available for assistance with any female students.

November

- ☐ Continue promoting contest on social media, TV, radio, to schools, churches, and youth organizations.

- ☐ Email your prospective Judges and include a sample Scorecard, Judges Instructions, and Suggestions to Judges.
- ☐ Email and re-confirm with other volunteers as needed.
- ☐ Continue trying to get student contestants.

December

- ☐ Follow up with Judges and volunteers and students to make sure everyone knows the contest date and see if anyone has any issues.

January

- ☐ Finalize and re-confirm the venue, all judges, and volunteers. Check to make sure your venue has an American Flag still in place. A podium is very helpful for to Contest moderator.
- ☐ Give names of people getting certificates to Department so they can print them for you if needed.
- ☐ Prepare thank you notes or small gifts of appreciation for your contest officials and helpers.
- ☐ Send signed, original copy of Certification form to next level Oratorical Chair and a copy to Department Programs Director.

People Needed	Names
Judge 1	
Judge 2	
Judge 3	
Judge 4	
Judge 5	
Timekeeper 1	
Timekeeper 2	
Tabulator 1	
Tabulator 2	

Tabulator 3	
Escort 1	
Escort 2	
Escort 3	
Cologuard	
Sergeant At Arms	
Chaplain	
Photographer	
Musician	
Department Commander	
Area Commander	
District Commander	
Post Commander	
School officials of participating schools	
Distinguished Visitors	
Volunteer 1	
Volunteer 2	
Volunteer 3	

Each Judge will need a packet of information that includes:

- ☐ Copy of Judges Instructions
- ☐ Copy of Suggestions to Judges
- ☐ Work sheets for Prepared Oration – one for each student
- ☐ Work sheets for Assigned Topic – one for each contestant

- ☐ Judges Scorecard – one scorecard covers six contestants
- ☐ A notepad
- ☐ Two pencils, one pen each

Timekeepers need:

- ☐ Two stopwatches (suggest easy to use ones that have no sound)
- ☐ A Timekeeper Card
- ☐ Timekeeper Instructions
- ☐ Time cards numbered 3, 4, and 5 on both sides
- ☐ Time cards numbered 8,9, and 10 on both sides with 9 underlined
- ☐ Two pencils each



This stopwatch is from Learning Resources and Walmart has them for \$7.49 each. it's large and easy to read, does not beep and has simple Stop, Clear and Go buttons. I have attended contests where the stopwatch was complex and started beeping. No matter what button the timekeeper pushed, the stopwatch would not stop beeping. It's very distracting to the speaker because the timekeepers sit right in front of them and very close to them.

Tabulators need:

- ☐ Tabulation Instructions
- ☐ Laptop or tablet to do online tabulation
- ☐ Wi-Fi connection or Hotspot
- ☐ Tabulation cards in the event there is no Wi-Fi
- ☐ Calculators for each
- ☐ Several pencils and erasers

Chair needs:

- ☐ The Script
- ☐ Certification forms for each contestant
- ☐ Contest Survey Sheet
- ☐ Four envelopes with the Assigned Topics
- ☐ Thank You notes for Judges and others
- ☐ Winner and Participant Certificates for Contestants
- ☐ Biographies of Judges
- ☐ Extra pens and pencils, paperclips
- ☐ American Legion Membership forms for prospective new members
- ☐ An American Flag if your venue does not have one on site
- ☐ Tape to mark of presentation space on the floor

- ☐ Stopwatches for Timekeepers
- ☐ Calculators for Tabulators
- ☐ Bottled water for the contestants and Judges

CONTEST DAY

- ☐ Arrive early to set up needed tables and chairs.
- ☐ Make sure people can find the entrance to the venue and that there is adequate parking. Heavy rains or other inclement weather can unexpectedly flood a parking lot.
- ☐ Mark off an area for the speakers.
- ☐ Prepare your container with the numbers for the contestants to draw their placement.
- ☐ As contestants arrive have a volunteer show them around the venue so they can see where the restrooms are, where the holding rooms are. Once students have been oriented, it's best to have them wait in the first Holding Room so they will not inadvertently see or hear who the Judges are.

ORDER OF APPEARANCE OF CONTESTANTS

- ☐ When all the contestants have arrived and are in the first holding room, a contest official conducts a drawing to determine the order in which contestants appear. This is a random drawing of numbers. The contestants appear in the same order for both the Prepared Oration and the Assigned Topic discourse.
- ☐ If a contestant is traveling a great distance and is late due to inclement weather or conditions out of their control (such as traveling by bus), if all contestants agree, the contest can be postponed for a short time to give the contestant time to arrive. Any postponement should not exceed an hour but will be left to the discretion of the Chair.

SCRIPT FOR CONDUCTING A FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTEST

Good morning/afternoon/evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the American Legion's annual (insert your Post/District or Area here) High School Oratorical Contest.

Before we begin the contest, I will ask that Legionnaires uncover and everyone please rise.

The prayer will be given by: _____.

Please remain standing for the pledge of allegiance, which will be led by: _____.

After the Pledge of Allegiance, you may be seated.

This morning/afternoon/evening you will be hearing (insert the number of contestants speaking) contestants. You will notice that the contestants are not on stage at this time. Throughout the contest, they will appear on stage only to deliver their orations. Our speakers will be introduced by number only.

In all fairness to the speakers, I ask that you do not applaud until the contest is completed. I would also ask that you refrain from taking pictures, do not smoke or leave your chair while a contestant is speaking. If you have a cell phone, please turn it off and also turn the volume down to zero.

Each speaker is about to deliver an eight to ten minute prepared oration on some aspect of the United States Constitution. They are not allowed to use notes, a podium, or a sound system.

The contestants will be shown a time card after the eighth, ninth, and tenth minute marks of their prepared oration. If there is a violation of the time requirement, a penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof, shall be assessed against the contestant's total score.

There will be a slight delay between contestants in order to allow the judges' time to mark their scorecards.

Before introducing the last speaker, I will ask (insert name of person drawing the Assigned Topic) to draw an Assigned Topic from the four provided. All contestants will then speak on the same subject, for no less than 3 minutes or more than 5 minutes. When the last contestant has given his or her prepared oration, Contestant 1 will be taken to a private room and given the topic card and allowed up to five minutes to prepare his or her Assigned Topic. I will read the Assigned Topic to you before Contestant 1 is introduced.

If everyone is ready, I will call for:

Contestant 1. The title of his or her oration is:

(Contestant 1 gives speech. When finished Contestant 1 goes to Holding Room 2).

Time, please. The time of Contestant 1's oration is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Contestant 2. The title of his or her oration is:

(Contestant 2 gives speech. When finished Contestant 2 will go to Holding Room 2).

Time, please. The time of Contestant 2's oration is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Contestant 3. The title of his or her oration is:

(Contestant 3 gives speech. When finished Contestant 3 will go to Holding Room 2).

Time, please. The time of Contestant 3's oration is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Contestant 4. The title of his or her oration is:

(Contestant 4 gives speech. When finished Contestant 4 will go to Holding Room 2).

Time, please. The time of Contestant 4's oration is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Contestant 5. The title of his or her oration is:

(Contestant 5 gives speech. When finished Contestant 5 will go to

Holding Room 2).

Time, please. The time of Contestant 5's oration is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Draw the Assigned Topic before the last contestant is called to give their Prepared Oration. If you have 4 contestants, you should draw the Assigned Topic at the end of Contestant 3's Prepared Oration. If you have two Contestants, draw the Assigned Topic after the first speaker. The selected Assigned Topic is given to an escort to take to Contestant 1 in a holding room. Keep your copy of the Assigned Topic that was drawn as you will read it to the audience soon.

Contestant 6. The title of his or her oration is:

(Contestant 6 gives speech. When finished Contestant 6 will go to Holding Room 2).

Time, please. The time of Contestant 6's oration is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

For the past five minutes, Contestant 1 has been in a private room preparing for the Assigned Topic presentation. The topic the contestants will address during this portion of the contest is:

Read the complete Assigned Topic.

Now, if everyone is ready, I will call on **Contestant 1.**

Contestant 1 gives Assigned Topic. When finished Contestant 1 will go back to Holding Room 1.

Time please. The time of Contestant 1's Assigned Topic is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Contestant 2.

Contestant 2 gives speech. When finished Contestant 2 will go back to Holding Room 1.

Time please. The time of Contestant 2's Assigned Topic is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Contestant 3.

Contestant 3 gives speech. When finished Contestant 3 will go back to Holding Room 1.

Time please. The time of Contestant 3's Assigned Topic is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Contestant 4.

Contestant 4 gives speech. When finished contestant will go back to Holding Room 1.

Time, please.

The time of Contestant 4's Assigned Topic is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Contestant 5.

Contestant 5 gives speech. When finished Contestant 5 will go back to Holding Room 1.

Time, please.

The time of Contestant 5's Assigned Topic is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

Contestant 6.

Contestant 6 gives speech. When finished Contestant 6 will go back to Holding Room 1.

Time, please.

The time of Contestant 6's Assigned Topic is:

Minutes:	Seconds:
Penalty Point(s):	0 or 1 or 2 or 3 or 4

This concludes the competition portion of the program. Will the Judges and Tabulators please accompany me to the tabulation room for the determination of the winner?

Tabulation process takes place in a private area or away from where contestants and audience members can hear them or see

the score cards. While tabulation takes place, the audience is free to have refreshments and mingle. The contestants are free to be escorted to the rest rooms if needed. When tabulation is completed you will resume the program. If you have music, the musicians can play during this time while tabulation is taking place. Have volunteers set up chairs on the stage for the contestants to sit while the winners are announced.

Resume Program

At this time I would like to publicly thank those individuals who assisted with this contest; the judges, timers, tabulators, escorts and Department staff. Name names. When introducing the timers and tabulators, give the Post number they represent. Recognize any previous Department Commanders and distinguished visitors.

Be prepared to give a short bio of each judge when they are introduced.

Appearing as Contestant 1 is:

Name of Student	
He or she is a Freshman, Junior, Sophomore or Senior at:	(name of school)

Appearing as Contestant 2 is:

Name of Student	
He or she is a Freshman, Junior, Sophomore or Senior at:	

Appearing as Contestant 3 is:

Name of Student	
He or she is a Freshman, Junior, Sophomore or Senior at:	

Appearing as Contestant 4 is:

Name of Student	
He or she is a Freshman, Junior, Sophomore or Senior at:	

Appearing as Contestant 5 is:

Name of Student	
He or she is a Freshman, Junior, Sophomore or Senior at:	

Appearing as Contestant 6 is:

Name of Student	
He or she is a Freshman, Junior, Sophomore or Senior at:	

Now, the moment we've all been waiting for---

Our 6 th place winner is:	Name:
School:	Sponsored by Post:
Our 5 th place winner is:	Name:

School:	Sponsored by Post:
Our 4 th place winner is:	Name:
School:	Sponsored by Post:
Our 3rd place winner is:	Name:
School:	Sponsored by Post:
The runner up is:	Name:
School:	Sponsored by Post:

If for any reason the winner cannot compete at the next level, the runner up will take their place as the winner.

Advancing to the District/Area/State Contest to be held on (insert date) at (insert place and contest location here) is:

Name: _____

School: _____

Sponsored by Post: _____

This concludes the Post/District/Area/State contest of the National High School Oratorical contest. Thank you for coming and have a safe trip home.

JUDGES INSTRUCTIONS

(Give a copy to each Judge and email a copy beforehand)

The Judges are a very integral part of the Oratorical Contest. Their qualifications are considered carefully as the decision of the Judges is final and must be reached without bias. Impartial judging in all contests is the key to fairness and success of the program which results in the selection of a State Champion.

The contests shall have three Judges. No publicity shall be given to the names of the Judges in advance of the contest. During the contest, the Judges shall be seated in different locations in the auditorium, and each Judge shall render his final decision without consultation with other Judges or any other person. Official Score Cards will be furnished by the Contest Chair for the use of Judges in the contest. The Chair will meet with the Judges at a time and place arranged by the Chair prior to the contest. The purpose of this meeting is for the final briefing and to ascertain that the Judges have a thorough understanding of their responsibility and have necessary materials for the contest. Judges should carefully study and possess a thorough understanding of the Score Card and scoring system. This is to include all areas under Content and Speaking Skills on the Score Card. A Judge having any questions should consult with the Chair prior to the Contest.

Lack of emphasis in the Prepared Oration and the Assigned Topic on the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen must result in the Judges downgrading the contestant involved. **Judges may downgrade a contestant up to a total of 10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution.** The Chair will announce any violation of time for each contestant. A penalty of one point for each minute, or fraction thereof, shall be assessed against the contestant's total score.

The Judges, Timekeepers, Tabulators and Chair, following the last Assigned Topic, will proceed to a private room for final review and tabulation.

Each Judge shall insert the total number of points credited to the contestant in the Final Total Points blocks and insert his choice of placement of each contestant in accordance with the highest total point scores in the Record of Choice blocks. If a tie exists in the total point scores on a Judge's Score Card, the Judge must go back and make adjustments in his scoring of the tied contestants so that no two contestants have the same Total Point Score, which will enable the Judge to rank one contestant above the other in the Record of Choice blocks.

SUGGESTIONS TO JUDGES

It is suggested that prior to the contest, each judge should carefully study the point scoring system in relation to the factors to be considered during the presentation of the prepared oration and the assigned topic discussion by each contestant, namely, *content of oration and speaking skills*. Listed below you will find items which should be given attention in specific areas (see listing of point values on Official Score Card).

CONTENT

1. Originality, freshness, directness, applies knowledge on topic.
 - Is there an original and fresh approach to the topic?
 - Does it relate directly to the subject?
 - Is information applied to aspects of the subject?
 - Does the information flow directly to the audience?
 - Does the speaker stay on topic?
 - Does the assigned topic speech appear to be "canned"?
2. Skill in selecting examples, description, analogies, specific data.
 - Are examples applicable?
 - Do the illustrations appear as an "axe to grind" not exactly related to the subject?
 - Is adequate information provided on examples or descriptions to inform the audience fully on the points?
 - Is proper credit given to quotations or subject matter borrowed from authorities?
 - Are specific data utilized to enrich the subject matter?
3. Logic (Correctness of Inference).
 - Are illustrations supported by logic or facts?
 - Are conclusions properly drawn?
 - Are there inconsistencies in the use of an application of the logic?
 - Are inferences made without proper support or logic?
4. Comprehensiveness of knowledge; knows subject matter.
 - Is plagiarism involved?
 - Does the speaker show a broad grasp of this subject?
 - Does the overall speech effectively demonstrate comprehensiveness and unity of thought(s)?
 - Is the topic significant when viewed as a whole?
 - Does the overall impression outweigh the component parts?
 - Does the assigned topic speech appear to be memorized to the point where its discussion value is lost?
 - Is the total speaking informational and educational for the audience?
 - Is an overall humbleness (or respect) evident in both the prepared and assigned topic speeches?

SPEAKING SKILLS

1. Voice and Diction.

- Does the voice used detract from the content? Pitch? Nasal quality?
- Does the speaker use the proper volume for the physical conditions which surround him?
- Do the words and sentences run together? Articulation? Enunciation?
- Are there errors in pronunciation?

2. Style: Language use, word arrangement, transition, word selection.

- Is the language use appropriate?
- Are the sentences succinct?
- Are the sentences involved to the point that immediate interpretation is not easy? Grammar?
- Does the speaker get lost with many extraneous clauses or phrases?
- Are the words easily identifiable for meanings? Do they fit?
- Is sentence and paragraph transition smooth and continuous?
- Is there a proper introduction, a main body of the speech and a summary or conclusion?

3. Body Action: Poise, eye contact, posture, gestures.

- Is the speaker at ease while speaking?
- Does the speaker have eye contact with all of the audience so that he appears to be speaking to all of them?
- Is his posture of an alert nature?
- Do his movements and gestures enhance or detract from the content and delivery?
- Is the speaker too dramatic?
- Does the speaker's body action and delivery give the appearance of cockiness or "know-it-all" attitude?

Lack of emphasis on the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen to their government **MUST** result in the judge downgrading the score of the contestant involved.

OFFICIAL JUDGING SCORE CARD

The method of judging, scoring, and point values indicated on the Score Card were devised especially for this contest.

These were devised to provide Judges with criteria to select fairly and adequately the best contestant of the contest.

To attain this objective Judges must become familiar with all factors involved.

Quotations are to be indicated as such, and if the quotations are more than ten (10) words in length, the name of the author must be given. The penalty for plagiarism is disqualification.

At the close of the contest Judges must fill out the Score Card completely in accordance with the contest rules, total all columns and affix signatures.

Tabulators will collect Score Cards from Judges at the close of the contest and tabulate the results under the supervision of the Chair.

At the proper time, in accordance with contest rules, the Chair or his representative, will announce the results of the contest and introduce the Judges to the contestants and audience.

Judges will not discuss any phase of the contest or their judging methods with contestants, parents, coaches, escorts, or others (outside of the chair) following the contest. Judges are encouraged to meet the students after the contest to give constructive criticism but should never divulge any details as to how the student was ranked or scored.

Chairs and tabulators are not permitted to divulge any information from the Judge's Score Card. Persons interested in the scoring for professional reasons may, upon written request to the Department Program Director, be mailed copies with the names of Judges omitted.



THE AMERICAN LEGION

HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM - "A CONSTITUTIONAL SPEECH CONTEST"



JUDGE'S SCORECARD

NAME OF JUDGE: _____

A. CONTENT			Contestants					
			1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Was the speech original, fresh, and direct, applying the student's knowledge?	Prepared Oration	12 points						
	Assigned Topic	4 points						
2. Did the student skillfully select examples, descriptions, analogies, and specific data?	Prepared Oration	12 points						
	Assigned Topic	4 points						
3. Was the speech logical, well organized, and developed?	Prepared Oration	12 points						
	Assigned Topic	4 points						
4. Did the student show a comprehensiveness of knowledge of the subject matter?	Prepared Oration	16 points						
	Assigned Topic	6 points						
B. SPEAKING SKILLS			1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Did the student use volume, rate, pitch, and diction effectively?	Prepared Oration	6 points						
	Assigned Topic	4 points						
2. Rate the speaker's style: language use, word arrangement and selection, and transitions.	Prepared Oration	6 points						
	Assigned Topic	4 points						
3. Were body actions -- poise, eye contact, posture, gestures, facial expressions -- appropriate?	Prepared Oration	6 points						
	Assigned Topic	4 points						
SUB-TOTAL								
PENALTIES: 1 point for each minute or fraction thereof over or under allotted time	Prepared Oration							
	Assigned Topic							
1-10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution								
Final Total Points								
Position Number - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (Highest Points = 1st place, second highest points = 2nd place, etc.)								

Score all contestants - NO TIES PERMITTED

Judge's Signature: _____

SCRATCH TALLY SHEET FOR JUDGES

Judge # _____ PREPARED ORATION

Does the Contestant's Oration Relate to Some Aspect of The Constitution of the United States with emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government?

_____ YES _____ NO

Contestant Number: _____		
A. CONTENT	SCORE	REMARKS or NOTES
1. Originality – Freshness, directness, application of knowledge on Topic	(12)	
2. Skill in Selecting Examples, Description, Analogies, Specific Data	(12)	
3. Logic (Correctness of Inferences)	(12)	
4. Comprehensiveness of Knowledge Knows the Subject Matter	(16)	
B. SPEAKING SKILLS		
1. Voice and Diction	(6)	
2. Style: Language Use, Word Arrangement, Word Selection, Transitions	(6)	
3. Body Action: Poise, Eye Contact, Posture, Gestures	(6)	
TIME PENALTY POINTS		
TENTATIVE TOTAL		

Tentative Total = (Total Content Points + Total Speaking Skill Points) – Time Penalty Points

SCRATCH TALLY SHEET FOR JUDGES

Judge # _____ ASSIGNED TOPIC

Contestant Number: _____		Did the contestant speak on the subject? _____ YES _____ NO	
A. CONTENT	SCORE	REMARKS or NOTES	
1. Originality - Freshness Applies Knowledge-Stays on Topic	(4)		
2. Skill in Selecting Examples, Description, Analogies, Specific Data	(4)		
3. Logic (Correctness of Inferences)	(4)		
4. Comprehensiveness of Knowledge; Knows the Subject Matter	(6)		
B. SPEAKING SKILLS			
1. Voice and Diction	(4)		
2. Style: Language Use, Word Arrangement, Word Selection, Transitions	(4)		
3. Body Action: Poise, Eye Contact, Posture, Gestures	(4)		
TIME PENALTY POINTS	—		
TENTATIVE TOTAL			

Tentative Total = (Total Content Points + Total Speaking Skill Points) – Time Penalty Points

TABULATOR INSTRUCTIONS

Each contest at all levels below the Department Finals shall have three (3) Judges and two (2) Tabulators. The Judge's score card shall be completely tabulated and signed by the Judge. The score cards will be numbered in the upper right hand corner corresponding to the Judge's number.

The Tabulator shall add up the total **Record of Choice** figures for each contestant. The contestant receiving the **highest score** will be declared the winner. In the event of a two contestant tie, the contestant with a majority of the Judges Record of Choice will be the winner.

When three or more contestants are tied, the contestant with the highest **Final Total Points** shall be the winner. In case of a tie on the record of choice and Final Total Points, the Judges will reconsider their scores and make a change.

The lowest number (1) for Record of Choice should be the same as the highest Final Total Points.

Only whole numbers will be recorded by the Judges when scoring.

The only person authorized to announce the winners at the contest is the Chair.

Tabulators are not permitted to divulge any information related to their contest.

TABULATION CARD

The American Legion Department of Florida Oratorical Contest

DATE: _____ POST / DISTRICT / AREA / DEPARTMENT: (ADD LOCATION) _____

Contestants-Record of Choice								Contestants-Final Total Points (for a 3-Way tiebreaker Only)							
Judge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Judge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1								1							
2								2							
3								3							
4								4							
5								5							
6								6							
7								7							
Total								Total							

ALL TABULATOR'S SIGNATURES REQUIRED

Signature: _____ Signature: _____ Signature: _____

TIMEKEEPER INSTRUCTIONS

There shall be two (2) Timekeepers for the contest located on the main floor and in full view of the contestants as they deliver their orations.

The Timekeepers shall be equipped with:

- ☐ Stopwatches (2)
- ☐ Timekeeper Record Card
- ☐ Time Cards Numbered 8, 9, and 10 for Prepared Oration
- ☐ Time Cards Numbered, 3, 4, and 5 for Assigned Topic
- ☐ Clipboards
- ☐ Pencils

The Chair will meet with the Timekeepers prior to the contest. It is recommended that the Time Cards have the large, bold numbers printed on both sides. When a Timekeeper is holding a card up for the contestant to see, then the audience behind the Timekeepers can see which minute mark the contestant is at.

Timing Procedure

1. Begin when contestant begins his Prepared Oration and stop when contestant ceases to speak.
2. Enter exact time consumed (in minutes and seconds) for both the Prepared Oration and the Assigned Topic on the Timekeeper Record Card.
3. Prepared Oration must not be less than eight (8) or more than ten (10) minutes. After eight (8) minutes have been consumed, hold the number 8 card so that it can easily be seen by the contestant for ten (10) seconds. Do not wave or move the card from side to side. Repeat when nine and ten minutes have been consumed.
4. Assigned Topic must not be less than three (3) or more than five (5) minutes. Repeat the process explained above, using numbered cards 3, 4, and 5.

Reporting Time Consumed

1. The Chair will advise how you should report time to him.
2. You shall report minutes and seconds consumed.
3. For the benefit of the judges, the chair shall announce the time consumed by each contestant for both the Prepared Oration and Assigned Topic immediately after each contestant speaks. The Chair will announce any penalty incurred by the contestant for using more or less than the allotted time. He shall also advise of no penalty.

TIMEKEEPER CARD

The American Legion Department of Florida Oratorical Contest

DATE _____ POST / DISTRICT / AREA / DEPARTMENT _____

Contestant Number	Time Consumed Prepared Oration	Time Consumed Assigned Topic
Contestant 1	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 2	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 3	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 4	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 5	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____
Contestant 6	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____	Minutes: _____ Seconds: _____

Signature of Timekeeper: _____

Signature of Timekeeper: _____

Printed Name of Timekeeper: _____

Printed Name of Timekeeper: _____

BOTH TIMEKEEPERS' SIGNATURES ARE REQUIRED

PROMOTING YOUR CONTEST

One of the most challenging aspects of being an Oratorical Chair is successfully promoting your contest. This is especially true in the time of Covid 19 when schools are not allowing visitors and many students are taking classes from home virtually. It is essential to use social media and digital platforms to promote your contest.

Here are some suggestions about ways or places to promote your contest, but ultimately, it is up to you to decide how to reach your target audience.

Department Facebook Page	Oratoricalfal
Department Twitter Account	https://twitter.com/faloratorical
Department Instagram Account	https://instagram.com/oratoricalfal
Department Website	www.floridalegion.org/oratorical
Radio Public Service Announcements	See Attachments
Posters in places where students congregate	
Email (to students & teachers)	
Phone calls	
Student Government Leaders in schools	
School clubs, ROTC, Speech & Debate	
Home schooling organizations FPEA (Florida Parent Educator Association)	FPEA.com
Educational Conventions	
Teacher Workshops	Check with your local school board
Libraries	
Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA)	
Parent Teacher Association (PTA)	
Boys and Girls State	
Florida Forensic League	https://www.forensicscommunity.com/league/florida-forensic-league
Toastmasters	www.toastmasters.org
Junior Achievement	https://jausa.ja.org/
Florida Key Club	https://floridakeyclub.org/
StoA for home school students	Stoausa.org Christian Home School Speech & Debate
National Christian Forensics and Communications Association (NCFCA)	www.ncfca.org
Florida Department of Education	www.fldoe.org

HERD Home Educator Resource Directory	http://www.homeeeddirectory.com/
Florida Debate Initiative	https://www.fldebateinitiative.com/
National Speech & Debate Association	https://www.speechanddebate.org/
Marcus Foundation	https://www.everyday-democracy.org/
Florida Education Foundation	https://www.floridaeducationfoundation.org/
Pinned Post on Facebook PTA & PTSA Pages	
Article to school newspaper	See Attachments
Listed on school website under scholarships	
Morning announcement at schools	

Mistakes to Learn From

Even the best plans can go awry at times. Here are some things that happened that could derail your contest.

A Judge will not show up for the contest. Or they may be so late, the contest has to begin without them. Having a back up Judge already present and briefed is the remedy for that. This is a situation where you might have to use a Legionnaire member to fill in if you have no other qualified Judges to choose from.

A Judge brought an infant to the contest and when the baby started crying, she refused to let a volunteer take the baby out of the room. She had to leave the room with the baby. An alternate Judge was already in place and the greater the issue became that the student had to start over and it upset his routine and train of thought.

A Judge left the contest briefly to take a phone call. Again, we had alternate judges in place and the Judge who left the contest scores were not factored into the scoring. If any person leaves the contest while it's in progress, it could be a reason for a parent or student to challenge their scores as it's a distraction they had to cope with that the other contestants did not. Be emphatic with the audience during the introduction that NO PERSON is allowed to leave while a student is speaking.

At a lower level contest, the Timekeeper held up the minute cards for 3, 4 and 5 during the Prepared Oration where the cards 8, 9 and 10 should have been used. The Timekeeper held up the 8, 9 and 10 cards, too. To make it fair to the other students, we had the Timekeepers hold up the 3,4 and 5 cards in a similar fashion for ALL the contestants.

During Tabulation, the Wi-Fi would not stay connected so we could do the online Tabulation. If Judges, Tabulators, and/or Timekeepers are keeping score electronically, be sure to have printed cards for each position on hand in case the Wi-Fi goes out.

At a Department contest one year, the wrong students were introduced as the winners. The moderator had confused their order of preference with their actual placement. It was embarrassing but someone caught it and the correct winners were introduced.

At a District contest, a student got nervous and started crying on stage during her oration. She was trying to recover and keep going but the Timekeepers had stopped their watches during her first breakdown. In this case, she was unable to finish anyway so it was not a big problem but it's best to let one Timekeeper continue taking time if there is any doubt whether a student is finished or not.

A student was giving his Prepared Oration and came to a point he could not remember what to say. He stood there thinking but after some time, still could not find the words. He continued to stand on stage until the Timekeeper held up the 8 minute card. After the 8 minute card was held up, he nodded and took a step back indicating he was finished. He was given penalty points for being under on the time, but there was confusion as to how many penalty points to give him. And the Timekeepers did not note the moment when he first stopped talking as they did not know if it was a long pause or if he was finished. There was some discussion that he should have been disqualified for purposely trying to run out the clock.

A person had their cell phone turned off and in their pocket but during the course of shifting in their seats, the phone turned back on without them knowing it. Siri heard speaking and started to search for whatever she heard. When you tell the audience to turn off their phones, also tell them to take the phones out of their pockets so this cannot happen. It's prudent to tell the audience to first turn the volume all the way down, put the phone on silent and then turn it off. That way if it accidentally turns on, the volume will be on zero.

Inspiration and Resources for Students

One of the best ways to learn more about the Oratorical Contest is to watch videos of past winners. Because we are in Florida, I usually start with past National winners from Florida. The National website has some videos of past winners but it's just as easy to see videos on Youtube.

Here is Co'Relous Bryant, the 2007 National winner from Jacksonville, FL:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSZqomRviwY&list=TLchp4qMKasug>.

And Geeta Minocha, the 2015 National winner from Ocala:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bSi3ofDpgY>.

Podcasts

Presidential. A Podcast by Lillian Cunningham. In 44 episodes, notable historians and journalists explore the character, leadership and legacy of each of the American Presidents.

Constitutional. A Podcast by Lillian Cunningham. This series explores the Constitution and the people who framed it and reframed it—revolutionaries, abolitionists, suffragists, teetotalers, protesters, justices, presidents—in the ongoing struggle to form a more perfect union.

More Perfect. A Podcast by Radio Lab. Season 3 is all about the 27 Amendments and how the Supreme Court got so supreme. Seasons 1 and 2 are just as interesting.

We The People. A weekly show of constitutional debate hosted by National Constitution Center President and CEO Jeffrey Rosen where listeners can hear the best arguments on all sides of the constitutional issues at the center of American life.

Websites Apps & Organizations

www.Constitutioncenter.org

www.ConstitutionFacts.com

National Archives Charters of Freedom: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs>

The Avalon Project: The American Constitution. A Documentary Record:
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/constpap.asp

www.USHistory.org

C Span US Constitution Page: <https://www.c-span.org/classroom/>

Bill of Rights Institute: <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/>

Bill of Rights in Action: <http://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/>

Annenberg Classroom: <http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/>

LikeSo App. Say It media, Inc. was created to improve communication skills through practice with mobile apps that helps users train against verbal habits, to motivate and track and measure their speech fitness. Only available for iPhone and iPad.

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation & Institute Great Communicator Debate Series: <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/education/scholarship->

[programs/great-communicator-debate-series/](#)

The Bill of Rights Institute: This amazing non-profit educational organization works to engage, educate, and empower individuals with a passion for the freedom and opportunity that exist in a free society. They offer monthly debate preparation webinars, have a huge library of primary source documents, and offer a one week Constitution Academy in Washington, D.C. <https://billofrightsinsitute.org/about-us/institute/>

Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation: They host some of the best student debaters in the country at the Coolidge Cup tournament. Their virtual library has speeches, press conferences, primary sources, essays, videos and other artifacts relevant to great oratory. <https://www.coolidgefoundation.org/>

American Legion Oratorical Contest

Public Service Announcements (revised for Florida)

30 Seconds

***Education ... protecting the foundation of freedom that we as Americans cherish. American Legion Post **(number)** has information on over \$138,000 in scholarships for students in **(community)**. The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program can provide a stepping stone to further education. For more information contact **(your name)** American Legion Post **(number)** at **(your email address and phone number)**. Visit our website at www.floridalegion.org/oratorical for more information.

***College. Money. Two words that go hand-in-hand. It takes a lot of money to pay for a college education. For high school students, there is a way to actually talk your way to college. Each year The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program awards over \$138,000 in college scholarships. Contact **(your name)** at American Legion Post **(number)** at **(your email address and phone number)** for details. Find out today how you can get involved and talk your way to college. Visit our website at www.floridalegion.org/oratorical for more information.

20 Seconds

***Are you in high school? Planning on college? Need some college money? Then consider talking your way to college. You can if you're a winner in The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program. Contact **(your name)** at American Legion Post **(number)** at **(your email address and phone number)** for details. Talking can pay big dividends. Visit our website at www.floridalegion.org/oratorical for more information.

***Do you know someone at your high school who is an excellent speaker? Could this person use a college scholarship? Your local American Legion post has information on how to qualify for over \$138,000 in scholarships. Contact **(your name)** at American Legion Post **(number)** at **(your email address and phone number)** for details. Visit our website at www.floridalegion.org/oratorical for more information.

10 Seconds

***Talk your way to college? You can if you're a winner in The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program. Want to find out more? Contact **(your name)** at American Legion Post **(number)** at **(your email address & phone number)** for details. Visit our website at www.floridalegion.org/oratorical for more information.

***The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program offers students over \$138,000 in scholarships. Contact **(your name)** at American Legion Post **(number)** at **(your email address and phone number)** for details. Visit our website at www.floridalegion.org/oratorical for more information.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The American Legion invites high school students to compete in speech contest

Winners will earn scholarship money and a chance to compete in national finals

High school students of **(community or name the school)** have been invited by **(name of post, District or Area)** Post No. _____ of The American Legion to compete in the 83rd Annual American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program. The invitation to enter the competition was extended today by Post Commander **(or Post Oratorical Chair)** **(full name and contact information—email and phone number)**.

The contest for **(community or name the school)** students has been arranged with the full cooperation of local school officials and **(full name and title)** of the **(school name)** faculty who will assist with the contest arrangements.

This is a multi level contest where students first compete at the Post level, then progress to the District, Area and then State level. The winner of the State contest advances to the National Contest held in Indianapolis, IN in April of 2022.

The contest is open to any student in grades 9 through 12, including home schooled students.

To compete, the student must prepare and deliver an original 8 to 10 minute memorized speech about some aspect of the Constitution, with an emphasis on a citizen's duty to their country and government.

In addition to the awards by winners of the various elimination rounds of competition, college scholarships of \$25,000, \$22,500, and \$20,000 will be awarded to the first through third places in the national finals. Each state winner who competes in the first round of the national contest will receive a \$2,000 scholarship. Participants in the second round who do not advance to the national final round will receive an additional \$2,000 scholarship. The top three youth orators who have won all previous elimination rounds of the contest will vie for top honors in the national contest in May in Michigan.

The American Legion will pay the expenses of state winners at the national contest.

High school students in **(community or school)** who are interested in entering the competition will find complete rules and contest information at www.floridalegion.org/oratorical

(Post Letterhead)

Sample Invitation to Judge Letter

Dear So and So,

Date

I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate as a judge in our Post–District-Area of the American Legion National High School Oratorical Contest. We believe your experience and knowledge will be an asset in choosing a qualified winner, who will participate at the State finals in Orlando, FL on March 9, 2021.

The American Legion has been a sponsor of this activity for high school students throughout our great state for over 60 years. The National contest is in its 83rd year and has awarded over 1.3 million in scholarship money during this time.

Each year, the topic is some aspect of the US Constitution, with a focus on the attendant duties and obligations of each citizen to our government. Students must give an 8 to 10 minute memorized speech. Students get to choose what aspect of the Constitution they speak about, but there should be a heavy emphasis on a citizen's duty to their government.

Students first compete at a Post level, then District, then Area and Department (State) level. Finally, the student winning at the State or Department level goes on to represent Florida at the National Finals in Hillsdale, MI.

Our (insert Post, District or Area) contest will be held on (insert date, time and location).

If you agree to serve as a judge, you will receive an email with a sample scorecard and set of judges' instructions.

This is a great way to support the young people in our community and to fulfill your own civic duties.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Sign your name