

Seventy-Fifth Annual
DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK
The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program –
“A Constitutional Speech Contest”
• **OFFICIAL RULES** •
• **2011 - 2012** •

Sponsored By
THE AMERICAN LEGION
Department of New York
112 State St., Suite 1300
Albany, NY 12207
518-463-2215



Under the direction of
ORATORICAL CONTEST COMMITTEE
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Department Commander
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This brochure is published and distributed by the Oratorical Contest Committee whose names appear by authority of the Department Executive Committee.

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NAME OF LOCAL CHAIRMAN

PURPOSE

The American Legion, Department of New York each school year, sponsors an Oratorical Contest for high school students in New York. The purpose of The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program – “A Constitutional Speech Contest” is to develop knowledge and appreciation of the Constitution of the United States on the part of High School students. Other objectives of the contest include the development of leadership, the ability to think and speak clearly and intelligently, the preparation for acceptance of the duties and responsibilities, the rights and privileges of American citizenship.

SPONSORSHIP

The contests are sponsored by The American Legion Department of New York and American Legion Posts throughout the State.

The Post or County Organization sponsors the County winner in the District competition. The District winner and the second place winner are sponsored by the District in the Zone competition. The Department Committee sponsors the Zone winners in the final contest.

ORGANIZATION

The contest will be under the direction of The American Legion Oratorical Contest Committee and final authority on all issues raised shall remain with the committee. Any inquiry concerning the contest should be addressed to a member of the Oratorical Contest Committee.

FINANCES

The Oratorical Contest is financed entirely by The American Legion Department of New York and the participating American Legion Posts. In sponsoring the contest, The American Legion offers nothing for sale. No admission will be charged to any contest.

AWARDS

The American Legion Department of New York offers contestants competing in the Department Finals, scholarships only, in the following amounts: 1st place - \$6,000, 2nd - \$4,000, 3rd - \$2,500, 4th - \$2,000, and 5th - \$2,000. Contestants must give both their Prepared Oration and Assigned Topic Discourse in order to receive the scholarship moneys they are entitled to. Payments are made directly to your college and are awarded over a four year period. The scholarships awarded by The American Legion, Department of New York to the five Department Finalists may be used to attend any college or university in the United States.

The ZONE AWARDS are as follows: 1st place advance to Department Level Contest; 2nd - \$1,000 savings bond, 3rd - \$500 savings bond, and 4th - \$500 savings bond. If for any reason the Zone winner is unable to compete in the Department of New York Contest; the next Zone contestant that is available to compete will take his or her place. The replacement will relinquish their Zone award to the Zone Winner, and the replacement will receive all entitlements and compensations that the Zone Winner would have received had he/she participated at the Department of New York Contest. The Zone Winner will not relinquish its title as the Zone Champion.

Contestants in the District, Zone and Department contests must give both their Prepared Oration and Assigned Topic Discourse in order to receive the award they are entitled to.

Travel and hotel expenses are paid by the Department of New York for contestants in the Department of New York finals.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible participants in The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program – “A Constitutional Speech Contest” shall be **citizens of or lawful permanent residents of the United States.**

All contestants must be bonafide students herein described as any student under the age of twenty (20) years on the date of the National Finals Contest and who is presently enrolled in high school or junior high school (public, military, private, or parochial, or who are home schooled) located in New York State in which the curriculum is considered to be of high school grade level commencing with grade nine (9) and terminating with grade twelve (12). Students must be active in the above grade levels during the time of participation at any level of The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program – “A Constitutional Speech Contest”.

Contestants must compete in the State that their school is located in, and can enter competition through only one (1) Department (State).

TIME AND PLACE OF ELIMINATION CONTEST

County, District, and Zone Contests will be held in a timely manner to coincide with Department and National certification dates. The Department Contest will take place March 3, 2012. If the contest is cancelled due to inclement weather it will take place on March 10, 2012.

ELIMINATION CONTESTS

The contest shall be conducted on the basis of successive elimination contests: first by **Schools (if applicable)**, second by **Semi-County** and/or **County**, third by **Districts**, and fourth by **Zones**. The Zone contestants will compete for State honors and prizes at a contest to be held during the month of March.

The high school authorities are authorized, but not obligated, to conduct a contest to select their entries. A school may enter up to three (3) students into the County Contest provided the school certifies each student's entry on the official entry form (FORM # 6). A student who attends school in a county that does not participate in this program, but resides in a county that does participate, shall petition the Department Chairman for entry in the contest where he/she resides, provided, however, the school the student attends certifies his/her entry. If neither county participates (that is, where the student attends school or where he/she resides), the school certifying the student shall petition the Department Chairman for entry into another County Contest and/or entry into the District Contest. There are no limitations on home schoolers, but the official entry form (FORM # 6) must be submitted. Home schoolers must compete in the county they reside in. If the county they live in does not participate in this program they may petition the Department Chairman to compete in the next closest county that does. Students will be allowed to read their orations at the HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL ONLY. At all contests above the high school level, including semi-county contests, contestants will be required to present their speeches from memory.

The number of contestants in the District contests are as follows: Districts with two or three counties-the counties will report their first and second place winners to the District Chairman; Districts with more than three counties will divide the district into two sections and report the first and second place winners to the District Chairman. **No district will have more than six contestants in their contest.** The District Chairman will report the first and second place winners to the Zone Chairman.

A contestant who may have no competition in any elimination contest shall be certified as the winner of that contest, and said contestant shall be eligible for the next higher competition.

NATIONAL CONTEST

National Contest is April 13 – 15, 2012, in Indianapolis, Indiana. The New York State winner is eligible to participate in the National Quarter Finals Contest. The winner of this contest is eligible to compete in the National Semi-finals Contest. The winner of this contest then participates as one of the Three National Finalists where 1st place is awarded a college scholarship of \$18,000, 2nd - \$16,000, and 3rd - \$14,000. **The three National Finalists are ineligible for further participation at any level.**

CONTEST REGULATIONS

The Department of New York rules as set down in this brochure follow the National Rules very closely. This is done in order to prepare the contestant for the Department of New York finals and succeeding National Contests.

Uniforms are not permitted. Appropriate business attire is required of all contestants. Contestants are not permitted to wear clothing with school names or awards and medals from previous competitions.

The use of notes, amplification, lecterns, or speakers' stand by contestants, or prompting in any manner is **NOT** permitted **EXCEPT** at the high school level. The use of any type of audio/video recording, electronic/digital data gathering, receiving, and/or transmitting equipment in any form by the contestants or members of the audience is prohibited.

A drawing shall be held by an official of the contest to determine the order in which all contestants will appear. This order will remain the same for both the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse.

The time allotted for each contestant to deliver their prepared oration shall not be **less than eight (8) or more than ten (10) minutes** and for the assigned topic oration, **not less than three (3) or more than five (5) minutes.**

An official timer shall be named by the Contest chairman whose duty shall be to keep an accurate time record of each contestant and the timekeeper shall be located on the main floor in full view of the contestants. **The timekeeper shall begin timing each contestant at the start of the prepared oration.** The timer will be equipped with time cards for the prepared oration carrying the numbers 8, 9, and 10. When 8 minutes have elapsed, the time warning card with the figure 8 thereon shall be shown to the speaker, following with cards 9 and 10 as the speaker progresses. The same procedure shall be used with cards bearing the numbers 3, 4, and 5 during the assigned topic discourse. The Contest Chairman shall announce the time used by each contestant for the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse immediately after each contestant speaks. The Contest Chairman will then announce any violation of time for each contestant for the benefit of the judges. **A Penalty of ONE (1) POINT will be deducted from the final score for each minute, or fraction thereof, over or under allotted time for the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse.**

In the prepared oration, as well as in the assigned topic discourse, quotations must be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than **ten (10)** words in length, the author's name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally. The singing of a song(s) is not permitted and will result in the immediate disqualification of the contestant. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song provided proper attribution is made.

ALL CONTESTANTS AT EACH CONTEST LEVEL ARE REQUIRED TO SPEAK IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR BOTH THE PREPARED ORATION AND THE ASSIGNED TOPIC ORATION. 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.

Contestants may have in their possession a copy of their prepared oration or notes for the assigned topics in the first holding room. They may consult their copy of their prepared oration and notes for the assigned topics until they exit the holding room in order to begin the contest, at which time the copy of the prepared oration and their assigned topics notes will be surrendered to the contest official who is monitoring the first holding room. All will be returned to the contestant at the end of the contest.

THE PREPARED ORATION

THE SUBJECT TO BE USED FOR THE PREPARED ORATION MUST BE ON SOME PHASE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES WHICH WILL GIVE EMPHASIS TO 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 (8) OR MORE THAN TEN (10) MINUTES FOR DELIVERY.

ASSIGNED TOPIC

Prior to the District Contest, the assigned topic discourse will be omitted, however, beginning with the District contest and all further contests this feature will be included.

The assigned topic discourse must not take up **less than three (3) minutes or more than five (5) minutes**. The purpose of the assigned topic discourse is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of his/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 (5) minutes prior to the time of delivery. The topic will be on some phase of the Constitution of the United States selected from Articles and Sections as listed under assigned topics for the current year's contest in this pamphlet.

During the period of retirement and thought, the contestant must not consult any books or person and may refer only to the actual words of the topic provided on the card drawn.

JUDGING STANDARDS

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 Department Champion and, ultimately, a National Champion. No contest should be judged by an even number of judges.

JUDGING SYSTEM

No publicity should be given to the names of the judges prior to the Contest. During the Contest, the judges shall be seated in different locations in the auditorium and each judge shall render his/her decision without consultation with other judges or any other people.

Judges will be advised that lack of emphasis in the prepared oration and assigned topic discourse on the duties and obligation of a citizen must result in their downgrading the contestant involved. Judges are permitted to downgrade a contestant up to a maximum of **ten (10) points** for failure to speak on the Constitution.

The Contest Chairman will announce any violation to 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, tabulators and the Contest Chairman, following the last Assigned Topic Discourse, will proceed to a private room for final review and tabulation. **THE DECISION OF THE JUDGES IS FINAL.**

TABULATORS

The Contest Chairman will appoint no less than three tabulators for the Department Finals contest. It will be their responsibility to review the judges' scorecards to be certain they are fully tabulated and signed before they are submitted for final tabulation.

Judges scorecards for Department Finals **will not be divulged** to anyone at the site of the contest. The judges' scorecards become the property of The American Legion Department of New York.

DISQUALIFICATION

If, due to a violation of the contest regulations, a contestant is disqualified or voluntarily withdraws from the contest after having progressed through one or more of its stages, his/her place is to be taken by the contestant adjudged next best to him/her in the competition in which he/she participated prior to disqualification or withdrawal.

Should a contestant become suddenly unable to compete or withdraws from competition, then his/her place is to be taken by the contestant adjudged next best to him/her in the last competition in which he/she participated prior to his/her disability or withdrawal, provided said contestant is available and can proceed with the competition without unduly delaying the contest. If said contestant cannot be made available in time to receive briefing and permit starting the contest at the posted time, then the contest shall proceed with the available contestants.

Department of New York High School Oratorical Scholarship Program "A Constitutional Speech Contest"

A. CONTENT

1. Originality, freshness, directness, applies knowledge on topic – 16 Points. Prepared oration 12 Points. Assigned Topic 4 Points.
2. Skill in selecting examples, description analogies, specific data – 16 Points. Prepared oration 12 Points. Assigned topic 4 Points.
3. Logic (correctness of inference) – 16 Points. Prepared oration 12 Points. Assigned topic 4 Points.
4. Comprehensiveness of Knowledge, knows the subject matter – 22 Points. Prepared oration 16 Points. Assigned topic 6 Points.

B. SPEAKING SKILLS

1. Voice and diction – 10 Points. Prepared oration 6 Points. Assigned topic 4 Points.
2. Style: language use, word arrangement, transition word selection – 10 Points. Prepared oration 6 Points. Assigned topic 4 Points.
3. Body action: poise, eye contact, posture, gestures – 10 Points. Prepared oration 6 Points. Assigned topic 4 Points.

Penalty – **ONE (1) POINT** will be deducted from the final score for each minute, or fraction thereof, over or under allotted time for the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse.

Assigned Topics 2011-2012

Article I, section 9, clause 2:

"The privilege of the writ of habeas corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in cases of rebellion or invasion the public safety may require it."

Article IV, section 2, clause 1:

"The citizens of each state shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens of the several states."

Amendment 14, section 2, first sentence:

"Representatives shall be apportioned among the several states according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each state, excluding Indians not taxed."

Amendment 15, section 1:

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

PAST WINNERS
New York State High School Oratorical
Scholarship Program – “A Constitutional Speech Contest”

<u>Year</u>	<u>Winner</u>	<u>Home Town</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Winner</u>	<u>Home Town</u>
1939 **	Thomas Haggerty	Rosedale	1991	Katheryne Leccima	Spring Valley
1951 *	Ronald Hengen	Queens	1992	Julie Rose Kidd	Frewsburg
1953 **	Joel Bernstein	Buffalo	1993	Amy Christine DiStasio	Staten Island
1954*	George J. Clements	Penn Yan	1994	Kelly Cleary	Brooklyn
1955*	David Leahy	Brooklyn	1995**	Aron Egner	Ballston Lake
1957*	William Toth	Bronx	1996*	Lina Shah	Chestnut Ridge
1961**	Robert J. O’Connell	Bronx	1997	Christopher Geisel	Clifton Park
1968**	John Cangilos	Albany	1998-1999	Lisa Schwartz	East Hills
1973*	Jeanne Zurmuhlen	Staten Island	2000	Heather Derrigo	Watertown
1978*	David Silva	Staten Island	2001	Kara French	Philmont
1980*	Paul C. Kunhel	Garden City	2002-2003	Natasha S. Alford	Syracuse
1981-1982	Robert Barber	Watertown	2004	Jessica Kye Fredette	Syracuse
1983	Susan Noto	Williamson	2005	Evan Patrick Geary	Webster
1984	Joseph Clark	Lackawanna	2006	Rory A. Eaton	Wantagh
1985	Regina Biscoglio	Bronxville	2007	Serena R. White	Franklin
1986	Kedra Small	Buffalo	2008	Alanna Parisi	Staten Island
1987	Julie Kay Kuhns	Binghamton	2009	Kashyap Rajagopal	New York
1988	Marie I. Bodack	Yonkers	2010	Madison Malone Kircher	Warren
1989	John C. Stehlin	Buffalo	2011	Steven Velardo, Jr.	Dutchess
1990	James Hogan	Sodus			

*Denotes National Finalist **Denotes National Winner



STEVEN VELARDO, JR.

Steven Velardo, Jr. is a home-educated senior, who resides in Dutchess County, NY. Steven is an active member of the Danbury Police Explorers, where he serves as Sergeant, Field Training Officer, member of the SWAT Team, and has recently been elected Treasurer. He is also an active Civil Air Patrol Cadet. In addition, Steven actively serves his community in many ways, including as a Revolutionary War Re-enactor, museum docent, and library volunteer and public speaking coach for young students. He is also a member of a NY State Assemblyman’s Intern team. In his spare time, Steven enjoys taking part in 4H and Venture Crew Shooting Sports Clubs, and vigorously competes in forensics/debate. As a homeschooler, Steven has been able to pursue a variety of interests; he has studied Constitutional Law, and Beginning Arabic. Steven looks forward to a career in law enforcement after completion of his college studies.