

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY

2023-2024

CONTEST THEME - "What Are the Greatest Attributes of Our Democracy"

Voice of Democracy is a script-writing program designed to give high school students the opportunity to voice their opinion on a patriotic theme, which is chosen by the VFW Commander-in-Chief. All ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students enrolled in Kansas public, private, parochial schools, or home school programs are eligible to participate. Exchange students and past first place department winners are not eligible to participate. **CONTEST RULES:** Students record their original 3 to 5 minute essay on a flash drive/email submission on the above stated theme. They submit their flash drive/email submission, a copy of their written essay and the completed entry form to the local Post/Auxiliary chairman. The flash drive/email submission must be in their own voice without music, special effects or background sounds. Songs and poetry are not acceptable. Students may not identify themselves in anyway. **THE STUDENT DEADLINE TO THE POST IS OCTOBER 31, 2023** The winning Post flash drive/email submission, the written essay, along with the complete entry form, the student biographical questionnaire, recent photograph and parent release form must be in the hands of the **District Chairman** by **November 15, 2023**. Then the District winner needs to be in the hands of the **Department chairman** by **December 10, 2023**. See link for VOD brochure

<https://vfworg-cdn.azureedge.net/-/media/VFWSite/Files/Community/Youth-and-Education/Voice-of-Democracy-Entry-Form-Fillable.pdf?v=1&d=20200428T134713Z&la=en>

DEPARTMENT AWARDS

First Place: \$1,000.00 Second Place: \$500.00 Third Place: \$300.00

Department first place winner receives an expense paid trip to Washington D.C. to compete at the VFW National level and a chance at the \$30,000.00 first place National Scholarship. Starting in 2017 each Department winner is guaranteed at least a \$2,000.00 scholarship at National.

ALL CHAIRMAN, POSTS, DISTRICTS, PLEASE MAKE SURE ALL FORMS ARE COMPLETE WITH A RECENT PHOTOGRAPH

DISTRICT PARTICIPATION REPORTING

District Chairman: Please forward the completed District report form and summary to your Department Chairman no later than December 10, 2023.

POST NO. – List Posts that have declared students winner(s). Please list the participating Posts in numerical order.

AUXILIARY – If Post has an auxiliary, credit their participation by indicating YES or NO.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING STUDENTS – Number of students that actually entered the competition by writing an essay.

NUMBER OF POST WINNERS ADVANCED – Number of Post winners that were advanced up to the second level of competition (i.e. District).

SCHOLARSHIP/BONDS AND AWARDS – Total amount of dollars actually awarded to student participants.

ADDITIONAL MONEY EXPENDED – All additional monies (other than scholarships/bonds and awards) allocated and expended in conducting their program (banquets, gifts, pins, jackets, etc)

FORWARDING DISTRICT WINNER TO DEPARTMENT

District Chairman: The District winner's materials that should be forwarded to the Department Chairman (immediately after the District judging is complete) are:

- 1) District winner's completed official entry form
- 2) District winner's recording (flash drive email submission) (VOD only)
- 3) District winner's typed essay
- 4) District winner's photograph (close-up of head & shoulders)
- 5) District Summary Participation Report
- 6) District Voice of Democracy Report Form

BUDGET

AWARDS:

1st place award	\$1000.00
2nd place award	500.00
3rd place award	300.00
(\$300.00 paid by Auxiliary)	

MID-WINTER

2 banquet tickets @ \$25.00 (for 2 State VOD Chairs)	80.00
Plaque for 1 st place winner	40.00
7 VOD medals @ \$8.95	80.55
7 VOD pins @ \$4.50	40.50

TRIPS

Trip to Washington DC (National expense)

Freedom Foundation Trip Expense	
2023 paid to National Headquarters	515.00
Round trip plane ticket	450.00
Miscellaneous	50.00

	3056.05
(Auxiliary)	-300.00

TOTAL	\$2756.05
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Michael B. Holland
State VOD Chairman
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Arkansas City, KS 67005
620-446-0045
michaelbholland47@gmail.com

2023-2024 Theme

“What are the greatest attributes of our Democracy?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2023

Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$35,000 Award

What is the Voice of Democracy Program?

Since 1947, the Voice of Democracy has been the Veterans of Foreign Wars' (VFW's) premier scholarship program. Each year, nearly 27,000 high school students compete for more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives. Students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. This year's theme is, “**What are the greatest attributes of our Democracy?**”

Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level. Department (State) winners receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington DC, to tour the city, be honored by the VFW and its Auxiliary and receive their portion of \$171,000 in national awards, the top scholarship being \$35,000.

The Rules

Who can enter?

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12 by the Oct. 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Foreign exchange students, students age 20 or over, previous Voice of Democracy first place state winners, GED or Adult Education Students are ineligible.

What do I need to enter?

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or – 5 second max.) audio essay on a flash drive, or other electronic device. You will submit the recording, typed essay and this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or VFW Post for judging. In addition you can submit your emailed entry form, essay, and audio file to the VFW Post upon approval. You must be the sole author of your essay. The recording must be in your own voice and in English. Hearing/speech impaired students should email the Voice of Democracy National Office at youthscholarships@vfw.org for special instructions. No music, singing, poetry or sound effects are allowed. The body of the essay must not identify you in any way, (including, but not limited to your name, school, city, state, race, or national origin) although the recording & typed essay should be labeled with your name, to show ownership.

Where Do I Submit My Entry?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. Entries sent to VFW National will be returned. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions: First, visit this website vfw.org/FindaPost to “Find A VFW Post.” If you do not have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit this link <https://www.vfw.org/ContactUs/> and look for “Find a State Contact” to get your VFW state office's phone number and email. If you still need assistance, please email us at VFW National Headquarters at youthscholarships@vfw.org

What Is the Deadline for My Entry?

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, **Oct. 31, 2023**. It is the responsibility of the student to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location by ensuring it is a participating Post.

What Are the Judging Criteria?

Originality is worth 30 points:

Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Content is worth 35 points:

Clearly express your ideas in an organized manner. Fully develop your theme and use transitions to move smoothly from one idea to another.

Delivery is worth 35 points:

Speak in a clear and credible manner.

2023-2024 Official Entry Form
Voice of Democracy Competition
Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last
Address
City, State, Zip
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Phone Email
Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) Grade in School Age Jacket Size
School Name, City, State
Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)

To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian
(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)
Parent/Guardian Signature Date
()
Parent/Guardian Daytime Phone
Parent/Guardian Email

Participant Agreement for Students
Advancing to National Level

If selected as a first-place state winner, I have the consent of my parent/guardian and school to attend the Voice of Democracy National Finals in Washington, D.C. as a guest of the VFW National Organization. In consideration for permission to participate in the National Voice of Democracy Competition ("Competition") I do hereby, for myself, for my heirs, executors, administrators and assignees, waive, release and discharge all rights and claims which I have or which may hereafter accrue against the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and/or the Departments (state organizations) of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and their respective officers, agents, successors and assigns from any damages which may be sustained by me in connection with my participation in or association with the Competition and/or arising out of any travel related to the Competition. In the event of sickness, accident or injury in connection with the Competition, I consent to and accept the services of a duly licensed medical, surgical or dental specialist selected on my behalf and for such treatments, as they may deem necessary. I understand that VFW will not be liable for such treatment. I further understand that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States retains non-exclusive rights to use my audio file, essay, name and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

I Have Read and Understand the Rules and Participant Agreement

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have only entered the competition once yearly if otherwise eligible. I understand that if it is found that I have entered any other Post's competition or used this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

Signature of Student Participant Date

To Be Completed by the VFW Post
I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post Level Voice of Democracy Competition.
Post Commander/Chairperson Signature Post #
VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (if applicable)
Post Address
City, State, Zip
VFW Post Email
No. of students participating
No. of winners advanced to District
Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarship awards \$
Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$

To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Voice of Democracy Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Departments.
District Chairperson Signature Dist. #
Address
City, State, Zip
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Phone Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.
Department Chairperson Signature
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Daytime Phone Email
The winner has been will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on

For assistance contact:
816.968.1155
Email: youthships@vfw.org

Local VFW Post Information:
Contact:
Phone: Best Time To Call:
Alternate Contact:
Phone: Best Time To Call:

