

Official Rules of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation 2026 National Civics Bee® Contest – Essay Round ("Essay Round Rules")



SPONSOR

The sponsor of the National Civics Bee contest is the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 1615 H Street NW, Washington D.C., 20062 ("Sponsor").

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to participate in the National Civics Bee Essay Round (the "Essay Round"), an applicant ("Entrant") must:

1. Be a student in grades six through eight at the time of Entry (defined below in the section entitled "Entry Procedure");
2. Be the sole author of their Entry – no group entries, entries written by parents, or entries generated by artificial intelligence will be accepted;
3. Submit their Entry in the English language;
4. Submit a new, unique Entry, if they've participated in any National Civics Bee contests held in 2024 or before;
5. Agree to all National Civics Bee Rules;
6. Have not previously won first place at the National Civics Bee National Championship; and
7. Not be an Immediate Family Member of, or reside in the household of, a judge participating in any round of the 2025 National Civics Bee competition (a "Judge").

For purposes of these Essay Round Rules, "Immediate Family Member" means a parent, legal guardian, spouse, child, or sibling.

The following persons are not eligible to participate as Entrants in the Essay Round: (1) employees, officers, and directors of the Sponsor ("Foundation Persons"); (2) employees, officers, and directors of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States of America ("Chamber Persons"); (3) Immediate Family Members of, or individuals residing in a household (whether or not related) with, either Foundation Persons or Chamber Persons. The following persons are also not eligible to participate as Entrants in the Essay Round: (A) Immediate Family Members of Judges; and (B) any individuals residing in the household of a Judge (whether or not related to the Judge) of any round of the National Civics Bee.

TERM

The Essay Round will begin on September 8, 2025, at 6:01 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time and end on February 3, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time. All entries must be submitted by February 3, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time. The finalists will be contacted by March 8, 2026, by 11:59 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time.

ENTRY PROCEDURE

The National Civics Bee is made up of several rounds, each of which is governed by its own set of rules. Any provisions set out in these Essay Round Rules regarding other rounds are for informational purposes only and do not constitute rules with respect to any other round. All rounds of the National Civics Bee may be referred to herein collectively as the “Contest.”

To enter the National Civics Bee Essay Round, Entrants must personally write and submit a four-paragraph essay (500-750 words) in response to the four questions listed in the essay prompt accessible in the Application Portal and Essay Application Guide (“Entry”). Entries may be submitted online through the application portal at this link: [Application Portal Link](#) before February 3, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Hawaii Standard Time or by mailing a hard copy Mail-In Application Form, post-marked on or before February 3, 2026, to National Civics Bee, 1750 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, #27720, Washington, DC 20038. Mail-in submissions must be received by February 17, 2026, and include a fully completed Mail-In Application Form available for download at this link: [Mail-In Application Form Link](#). The information included in the Mail-In Application Form will mirror what is required when submitting Entries online.

After submitting an Entry, each Entrant will be assigned to a local organization hosting a Regional or Statewide Competition in their state of residence (the “Regional Host”), based on the Entrant’s location as provided by the Entrant. The Regional Host is responsible for selecting the highest scoring Entrants as regional finalists based on the essay judging criteria (listed below) and as provided in the Regional and Statewide Competition rules.

By submitting an Entry, each Entrant agrees to these Essay Round Rules and warrants that his or her Entry complies with all requirements set out in these Essay Round Rules.

NO PURCHASE IS NECESSARY TO ENTER OR WIN. IN NO EVENT WILL ANY PURCHASE INCREASE YOUR CHANCE OF WINNING. VOID WHERE PROHIBITED.
ALL APPLICABLE FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS APPLY.

FINALIST CERTIFICATES AND PRIZES

A certificate (which does not have any monetary/retail value) shall be provided to the highest scoring Essay Round Entrants selected as regional finalists for each Regional or Statewide Competition in accordance with applicable rules. Regional, State, and Statewide Competitions are subject to separate rules, terms, and conditions. Prizes may be won in the Regional, State, and Statewide Competitions, and may vary.

ODDS OF WINNING

This is a skills-based contest and chance plays no part in the determination of Essay Round winners. The odds of being named among the highest scoring Essay Round Entrants may vary greatly and depend on the number of Entries received and the quality of the Entries.

JUDGING CRITERIA AND PARTICIPATION OPTIONS

Each Entry will be evaluated by Judges selected by the Sponsor and Regional Hosts. Each Judge will use the 100-point judging rubric provided on the online submission page and in the [Essay Application Guide \(linked\)](#) to evaluate each Entry. The judging rubric made part of these rules sets forth the points and percentage weight attributed to each of the criteria. Criteria covered in the rubric include: "Clearly identifies and articulates a specific community opportunity, problem, or challenge with depth and insight" (20 points); "Clearly outlines thoughtful, logical, and well-sequenced steps to address the issue in a unique or innovative way" (20 points); "Identifies meaningful civic resources, people, and groups, opposing viewpoints, and clearly connects them to the plan" (20 points); "Clearly connects the solution to specific founding principles and civic virtues with strong reasoning" (30 points); "Uses well-researched information and references effectively to support the essay" (10 points).

Each Entry will be assigned to a Regional Host organization that is responsible for hosting either a Regional or Statewide Competition. The highest scoring Entries assigned to each Regional Host will be selected as the regional finalists, will be notified via email and/or phone, and will be invited to participate in their respective National Civics Bee Regional Competition or National Civics Bee Statewide Competition if no Regional Competition exists. All Regional, State, and Statewide Competitions are subject to separate rules, terms, and conditions.

RESPECTFUL CONTENT REQUIREMENT

Central to the National Civics Bee is the belief that civic engagement begins with thoughtful dialogue. This competition encourages students to express their views and analyze issues in ways that elevate the conversation and foster mutual understanding. To support this, we've provided the following content requirement to promote respectful debate and critical thinking.

When addressing community issues, essays should focus on the nature and impact of problems and challenges and must avoid blaming, disparaging, identifying as the cause of the problem or as a contributor to the problem, or otherwise criticizing any specific individual, company, organization, governmental body, or government official, by name or in any other identifiable manner ("Targeted Criticisms"). Submissions that include Targeted Criticisms may be disqualified or other appropriate action may be taken, all in the sole and absolute discretion of the applicable Contest administrator which may include but is not limited to the Sponsor or a Judge. This requirement supports the competition's mission to promote constructive civic dialogue and respectful engagement with community issues.

Illustrative Examples:

Acceptable: "There are only a few activities for teens in our town, which can lead to boredom and risky behavior."

May be disqualified: "The Parks Director refuses to build anything fun for teens."

Acceptable: "There is limited access to internet in our town, which makes it difficult to do homework."

May be disqualified: "Internet Provider X is horrible and should go out of business."

PUBLICITY RELEASE

You, as parent or legal guardian, hereby grant the Sponsor, any Regional, State, or Statewide Competition Hosts, and any corporate or individual benefactors of Regional, State, Statewide, and National Competitions (collectively, the "Licensees"), a non-exclusive, perpetual, worldwide, transferable license to edit, telecast, exhibit, display, rerun, reproduce, use, syndicate, license, print, distribute, and otherwise exploit any items (including any photos, videos, audio, or written material) submitted as part of the applicable minor's (i.e., the Entrant's) Entry, or any portion thereof, or recorded or otherwise provided at any point during the Contest, including any round thereof, in any manner, and in any and all formats and media now known or hereafter devised, without payment to you or any third party. You represent and warrant that you are the parent or legal guardian of the minor Entrant and provide your express consent for the Entrant and information about the Entrant to appear in any materials submitted in the Contest or related event or ceremony, and you have the full legal right, power, and authority to grant to the Licensees this license. Information about the Entrant may include the Entrant's name, address (city and state), likeness, photograph, voice, biographical information, and/or any statements made by the Entrant regarding the Contest, the Sponsor, or any other person or entity related to the National Civics Bee. Notwithstanding the foregoing, only the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation is provided a license to make public an Entrant's essay, or any portions or summaries thereof, and the Regional, State, and Statewide Competition Hosts are not permitted to make public an Entrant's essay or any portions or summaries thereof.

GENERAL RULES

No Entry can be withdrawn after the applicable deadline for Entry described in the section above entitled "Entry Procedure." Neither Sponsor nor any affiliated entities or agents of Sponsor are responsible for any illegible, lost, stolen, late, damaged, incomplete, mutilated or misdirected applications or other documents. Entrants are responsible for ensuring proper contact information has been submitted and is maintained throughout the National Civics Bee to allow communications about the National Civics Bee.

Materially erroneous or false information provided in the Entry will result in immediate disqualification of the Entrant, in the Sponsor's sole and final discretion. Sponsor and the Judges retain the right to disqualify any Entrant for sufficient cause, in their sole and final discretion.

Entrant warrants that the Entry and all components of the Entry were not generated, in whole or in part, by an artificial intelligence tool or system (including, but not limited to, large language models such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini). Use of any artificial intelligence tool or system will result in immediate disqualification

of the Entrant, in Sponsor's sole and final discretion.

If, for any reason, the National Civics Bee is not capable of running as planned, Sponsor reserves the right in Sponsor's sole discretion to cancel, terminate, modify, or suspend the National Civics Bee competition, including but not limited to the Essay Round, at any time. Sponsor reserves the right to amend these Essay Round Rules, or any other rules governing the National Civics Bee competition, at any time.

By creating an Entry, or by being an Entrant, you understand that there is no joint venture, partnership, employment, or agency relation between you and the Sponsor arising from any Entry.

All decisions of the Judges and the Sponsor are final. Entrants specifically agree that the decision of the Judges and any decisions of Sponsor are not subject to review or appeal in any forum whatsoever, including courts of law, to the maximum extent allowed by applicable law.

Any information provided as part of the Essay Round is provided according to the Privacy Policy available at this link: [Privacy Policy Link](#), as such policy may be amended from time to time, and as otherwise provided for in these Rules. Entrants agree that personal data, in particular name and address, may be processed, shared, and otherwise used for the purposes and within the context of the Contest and any other purposes outlined in these Essay Round Rules and according to the website's Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. The data may also be used by the Sponsor in order to verify the Entrant's First Name, Last Name, School Name, Address, Parent/Guardian's Phone Number/Email, or to otherwise verify the Entrant's eligibility to participate in the Contest. Participants have the right to access, review, rectify, or cancel any personal data held by the Sponsor by writing to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 1615 H Street NW, Washington D.C. 20062, civictrust@uschamber.com.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

By entering the Contest, Entrant agrees that (1) any and all disputes, claims, and causes of action arising out of or in connection with the Contest, or any prizes awarded, shall be resolved individually without resort to any form of class action; (2) any claims, judgment, and awards shall be limited to actual out-of-pocket costs incurred, including costs associated with entering the Contest, but in no event attorney's fees; and (3) under no circumstances, will any Entrant be permitted to obtain any award for, and Entrant hereby waives all rights to claim, punitive, incidental, or consequential damages, and any and all rights to have damages multiplied or otherwise increased and any other damages, other than damages for actual out-of-pocket expenses. In no event shall the liability of the Sponsor exceed \$100.

WINNERS LIST

To request a list of the names of the three finalists of the National Civics Bee National Championship send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to National Civics Bee, 1750 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, #27720, Washington, DC 20038.

Please direct any questions about these Essay Round Rules to the National Civics Bee, by email to civictrust@uschamber.com