

# 2021 NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST

*What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?*



An essay and video contest for high school students  
in the western United States and Pacific Islands.  
Contest rules and entry instructions available at

<https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>

Entries accepted beginning **February 1, 2021**. Deadline for entries  
is **March 17, 2021**. Sponsored by the United States Courts for the Ninth Circuit.

\* May be subject to federal, state or local taxes unless exemptions apply.

# What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?

Our Constitution both confers rights and establishes responsibilities. The Preamble that begins the Constitution speaks of the people's commitment to "secure the blessings of liberty," while also recognizing the need to "promote the general welfare." Among the many rights enshrined in the Constitution, for example, are the right to peaceably assemble, the right to free exercise of religion, and the right to a speedy and public jury trial in criminal cases.

Over the course of our country's history, global events have challenged us to find a balance between critical rights like these and our responsibilities to each other. The shelter-in-place orders implemented during the coronavirus pandemic, the rationing orders imposed during World War II and the Great Depression, and the mandatory smallpox vaccination programs instituted in the early 1900s are just some examples of times when we have been asked to curtail our normal freedoms for the benefit of our entire community. At the same time, each of us has a civic responsibility to participate in and contribute to our democracy. How should we as a society strike the appropriate balance within the framework of our Constitution between safeguarding our rights and fulfilling our responsibilities to each other?

"What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?" is the theme of a civics contest focusing on these important issues. Students are encouraged to discuss these themes with reference to the Constitution, and to consider the historical examples identified above, or other relevant events in American history, in their entries. In preparing an essay or video submission addressing the theme, students are encouraged to explain what part they believe each of us plays in working toward the "more perfect Union" described in the Constitution.

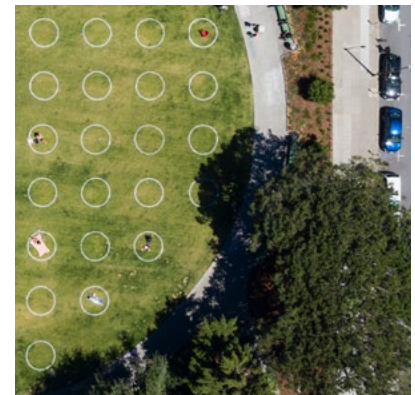
Individual students can express their thoughts and ideas on the theme in an essay of between 500 and 1,000 words. Individuals and teams of up to three students can produce a 3-5 minute video on the theme. A student may submit both an essay and video, and may submit only one essay and be involved in the production of only one video.

The contest is open to high school students in the Ninth Circuit (made up of nine western states and two Pacific Island jurisdictions). Students from public, private, parochial and charter schools and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status may enter. Children of federal judges, chambers staff, and employees of federal court offices are not eligible to participate.

In past contests, in addition to cash prizes, student winners were invited to the annual Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference held in July. However, since the conference is cancelled for 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, we have increased cash awards and will award a commemorative prize to winners to show our deep appreciation for the effort students are putting in. We hope to resume inviting winners to the conference in 2022.

The contest is sponsored by the Ninth Circuit Public Information and Community Outreach Committee (PICO). Contest rules will be available at <http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>. Both essays and videos can be submitted electronically starting February 1, 2021. **Deadline for entries is 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time, March 17, 2021.**

For more information, contact the Office of the Circuit Executive, (415) 355-8873 / [civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov).



Top: Empty supermarket shelves in Everett, Washington. Photo taken on March 14, 2020 by [Cindy Shelby](#).

Above: Social distancing circles marked out in Washington Square Park in San Francisco. Photo taken on May 27, 2020 by [Christopher Michel](#).

Front image: Students learning about war rationing at school in Washington, D.C. Photograph by Roger Smith in 1943 for the U.S. Office of War Information. Source: Library of Congress.

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