

# What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?

## 2021 NINTH CIRCUIT ESSAY CONTEST

**Who May Enter:** The contest is open to high school students in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, the United States Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Students in the 9th through 12th grades attending public, private, parochial and charter schools, and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status are invited to participate. Children of federal judges, chambers staff, and employees of federal court offices are not eligible to participate.

**Contest Theme: “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?

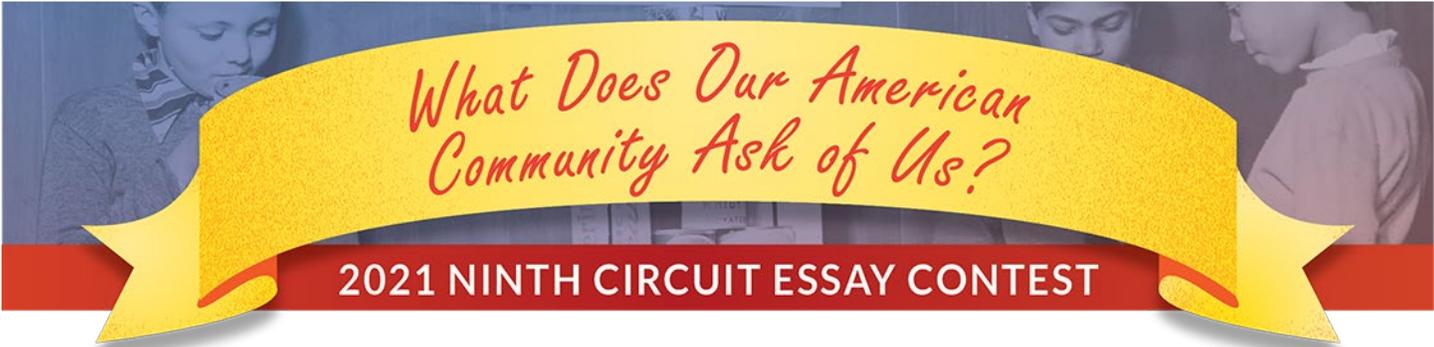
Students are encouraged to discuss these themes with reference to the Constitution, and to consider the historical examples identified above, or other relevant events in American history, in their entries. In preparing an essay submission addressing the theme, students are encouraged to explain what part they believe each of us plays in working toward the “more perfect Union” described in the Constitution.

**Length and Format:** Essays should be between 500 to 1,000 words. While not required, proper use of footnotes and bibliographies will be credited during judging. Footnotes and bibliographies will not be included in the word count. Essays must be submitted electronically on this website – <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest> – as a Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat document. When entering the contest, you will be provided instructions for uploading your document. A student may submit both an essay and a video. A student may submit only one essay and be involved in the production of only one video.

**Contest Duration:** Entries will be accepted beginning February 1, 2021. **The deadline for entries is 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on April 1, 2021.** Finalists will be selected in May and the winners announced in late May.

**Judging:** Judging will be based on the following criteria:

- 1) **Understanding of constitutional principles** **40 points**  
Demonstrates clear understanding of: (a) the balance between the constitutional rights and responsibilities discussed in the essay, (b) how the events in American history discussed in the essay reflect this balance between constitutional rights and responsibilities



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| 2) | <b>Clarity and effectiveness in expressing the theme</b><br>Organizes and communicates concepts and ideas clearly  | <b>30 points</b> |
| 3) | <b>Grammar, spelling and composition</b><br>Uses correct spelling, proper grammar and sentence composition         | <b>25 points</b> |
| 4) | <b>Use of footnotes, bibliographies</b><br>Properly identifies and attributes information taken from other sources | <b>5 points</b>  |

**Release Forms:** Should you become a finalist in the contest, you will be required to submit a release form allowing the Ninth Circuit to publish your essay in print publications and on court public websites. In addition, contest winners will be required to provide and authorize use of photographs of themselves in contest-related promotional materials.

**Disqualification:** Providing false information, not adhering to the rules, not meeting the submission deadline, or not providing a release form if requested may result in disqualification.

**Questions:** Contact the Office of the Circuit Executive, (415) 355-8873 / [civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov).



# What Does Our American Community Ask of Us?

## 2021 NINTH CIRCUIT VIDEO CONTEST

**Who May Enter:** The contest is open to high school students in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, the United States Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Students in the 9th through 12th grades attending public, private, parochial and charter schools, and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status are invited to participate. Children of federal judges, chambers staff, and employees of federal court offices are not eligible to participate.

**Contest Theme: “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?

Students are encouraged to discuss these issues 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 a 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.

**Length and Format:** Individuals or teams of up to three students can produce a 3-5 minute video (not including end credits). Submit as MOV, MPEG4, MPEG2, or WMV files. Resolutions of 720x486 pixels to 1920x1080 pixels are acceptable. Files may not exceed 1GB. Videos should be compressed using the H.264 codec. Submit your video on this website: <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>. A student may submit both an essay and a video. A student may submit only one essay and be involved in producing only one video.

**Contest Duration:** Entries will be accepted beginning February 1, 2021. **The deadline for entries is 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on April 1, 2021.** Finalists will be selected in May and the winners announced in late May.

**Judging:** Judging will be based on the following criteria:

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| 1) | <b>Understanding the theme</b><br><i>Demonstrates clear understanding of:</i> (a) the balance between the constitutional Rights and responsibilities discussed in the video, (b) how the events in American History discussed in the video reflect this balance between constitutional rights and responsibilities | <b>30 points</b> |
| 2) | <b>Exhibits originality and creativity, in a manner connected to the theme</b>   | <b>25 points</b> |
| 3) | <b>Engages the viewer on emotional/subjective level, in a manner connected to the theme</b>  | <b>25 points</b> |



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| 4) | <b>Displays good production values</b><br>Audio/video quality, editing | <b>10 points</b> |
| 5) | <b>Respects copyright rules</b><br>Properly credits content sources    | <b>10 points</b> |

**Release Forms:** Should you become a finalist in the contest, you will be required to submit a release form allowing the Ninth Circuit to display your video at public events and on court public websites. Releases also may be required of individuals appearing in your video. Contest winners will provide photos of themselves for contest-related promotional materials.

**Copyright:** Adherence to copyright laws and fair use practices. For more information about how to legally make use of imagery, music and other materials, please consult the resources page on this website  
<https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>

**Disqualification:** Providing false information, not adhering to the rules, not meeting the submission deadline, or not providing a release form if requested may result in disqualification.

**Questions:** Contact the Office of the Circuit Executive, (415) 355-8873 / [civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov).