



Voice of Democracy

2016 - 17 Theme

"My Responsibility To America"

Student Entry Deadline: November 1, 2016



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, almost 40,000 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, *My Responsibility To America*.

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, D.C., Feb. 25 - March 1, 2017, to tour the city, be honored by the VFW and its VFW Auxiliary and receive their portion of \$153,000 in national awards, the top scholarship being \$30,000.

THE RULES

Who can enter?

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12 by the Nov. 1 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 in an overseas U.S. military/civilian dependent school. 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 seconds max.) essay on an audio CD or a flash drive. One student per CD or flash drive. When burning your CD, make sure that "Create Audio CD" option (or similar) is selected so the program can properly convert your sound file and burn it to CD. After it has finished, be sure to play back your audio CD on a system other than your computer, such as a standard radio or car CD player, to verify that the conversion/burning process was successful. You will submit the recording, typed essay and this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or local 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 kharmer@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. You may enter only one competition at one Post (if otherwise eligible) per year. At any time during the contest, additional participant personal information could be requested by the VFW, including but not limited to a photograph, SSN, or biographical information.

2016-17 OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM VOICE OF DEMOCRACY COMPETITION

MUST BE COMPLETED BY ALL CONTESTANTS

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

()

Phone

E-mail

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade in School

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and E-mail (if applicable)

First Name You'd Like on a Name Badge

Jacket Size

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT'S PARENT/GUARDIAN
(required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

()
Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's E-mail

**I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE D.C. NATIONAL FINALS RULES
(ON OPPOSITE SIDE)**

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

Voice of Democracy

2016 - 17 Theme

"My Responsibility To America"

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OFFICIAL RULES 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. Feb 25-March 1, 2017 as a guest of the VFW National Organization.

I understand that state winners who do not attend as stated above will forfeit all rights to compete in the National Finals and will be replaced by their state's second place winner.

In the event my audio essay is selected for entry into the National Voice of Democracy 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 several 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 VFW Voice of Democracy Competition and/or arising out of my travel to and during 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 tape, essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

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's/Chairman's Signature _____ Post # _____

VFW Auxiliary President's/Chairman's Signature (if applicable) _____

Post Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

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 Department finals.

District Chairman's Signature _____ Dist. # _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

() _____
Phone E-mail

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition, is our sole entry into the National Judging and will attend the National Finals in Washington, D.C.

Department Chairman's Signature _____

() _____
Daytime Phone E-mail

The winner () has been () will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on _____. **Note:** National Headquarters will contact your winner after this date to make travel arrangements for them to be in Washington, D.C.

WHERE DO I SUBMIT MY ENTRY?

All entries begin at the local 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 local VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. This VFW Post should be within your local area and within your U.S. state of residence. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. State winners are invited to Washington, D.C. where their audio essays compete in the finals competition. If you need help finding a participating VFW Post in your area, follow these instructions: First, visit this website <https://www.vfw.org/oms/findpost.aspx> to "Find A VFW Post." Be sure this Post is within the state you reside in. 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 to the extreme far right side of that webpage (see the second grey box) for "VFW State Contacts" to get your VFW state office's phone number and e-mail. Some Departments have websites you can visit by visiting this link <https://www.vfw.org/Contacts/VFW-State-Department-and-District-Websites/>. If you still need assistance, please e-mail us here at VFW National Headquarters: kharmer@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, **Nov. 1, 2016**. 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.

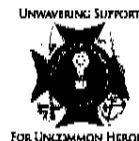
Content is worth 35 points:

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.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has again approved this contest for its National Advisory List of Contests and Activities.



Veterans of Foreign Wars & VFW Auxiliary
National Headquarters
Kansas City, Missouri
816.756.3390 ext.6117
E-Mail: kharmer@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

Revised 2/2016

LOCAL VFW POST INFORMATION :

CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____ BEST TIME TO CALL : _____

ALTERNATE CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____ BEST TIME TO CALL : _____



Patriot's Pen

2016 - 17 Theme

"The America I Believe In"

Student Entry Deadline: November 1, 2016



WHAT IS PATRIOT'S PEN?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 120,000 students who participated last year in this contest. The national winners will receive at least \$500. The first-place national award is currently \$5,000 plus an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. for the winner and a parent or guardian.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAASP) has again approved this contest for its National Advisory List of Contests and Activities.

BIG NATIONAL PRIZES

National awards total: \$50,500

Prizes include the various amounts listed below:

1st: \$5,000	7th: \$1,750
2nd: \$4,000	8-9th: \$1,500
3rd: \$3,500	10-11th: \$1,250
4th: \$2,750	12-14th: \$1,000
5th: \$2,500	15-16th: \$750
6th: \$2,000	17-54th: \$500

The Internal Revenue Service requires that any recipient that receives more than a \$599 award should receive a Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable.

HOW DOES THE CONTEST WORK?

All entries begin at the 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 local VFW Post competition. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. This participating Post should be within your local area and within your U.S. state of residence.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by local VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where the one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The one first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition. The winner from each Department (state) then competes for the national prizes.

WHO CAN ENTER?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th-, 7th- and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Nov. 1 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U. S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U. S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools can participate too. (Foreign exchange students and former winners that placed in the National contest are excluded from the contest.)

2016-17 OFFICIAL STUDENT PATRIOT'S PEN COMPETITION

ENTRY FORM MUST BE COMPLETED BY ALL CONTESTANTS
PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE CLEARLY

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

()

Phone

E-mail

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade In School

Essay Word Count

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and E-mail (if applicable)

Parent/Guardian's name phone/e-mail

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CONTEST RULES

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 Patriot's Pen Competition.

Post Commander's/Chairman's Signature

Post #

VFW Auxiliary President's/Chairman's Signature

Post Address

City, State, Zip

No. of students participating _____ No. of winners advanced to District _____

Amt. of Post/Aux. awards \$ _____

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, plna, 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 Patriot's Pen Essay Contest District Competition
and is our sole entry into the Department finals.

District Chairman's Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

()

Phone

E-mail

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly
selected first-place winner of the Patriot's Pen Essay Department
Competition, and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairman's Signature

()

Daytime Phone

E-mail

The winner has been will be (check one) notified that they are
the first place Department winner on _____. Note: National
Headquarters will contact your winner after this date to notify them
of their national placement.

VFW Teacher Nomination Form

Please photocopy or cut out and attach to nomination essay.

Nominated Teacher

Name: _____

Email: _____

Subject and grade taught: _____

Current school: _____

School address: _____

School phone #: _____

On a separate piece of paper, please describe (type or print) in 350 words or less why you feel your nominee should be selected for the Smart/ Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award, then sign the nomination statement.

Submit nomination materials to your local VFW Post. Visit www.vfw.org for locations. **DO NOT** send to VFW National Headquarters.

_____ Number of words in essay (not to exceed 350). Please provide this information.

Person Nominating Teacher

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone #: _____

Date submitted: _____

Signature: _____

Deadline: Submit to local VFW Post by February 15.

VFW Honors America's Teachers

Identify and recognize America's best educators. Wouldn't you like to see them get the honor they deserve?

Now you can.



For more information, contact your local VFW Post or its Auxiliary or visit our website at www.vfw.org.

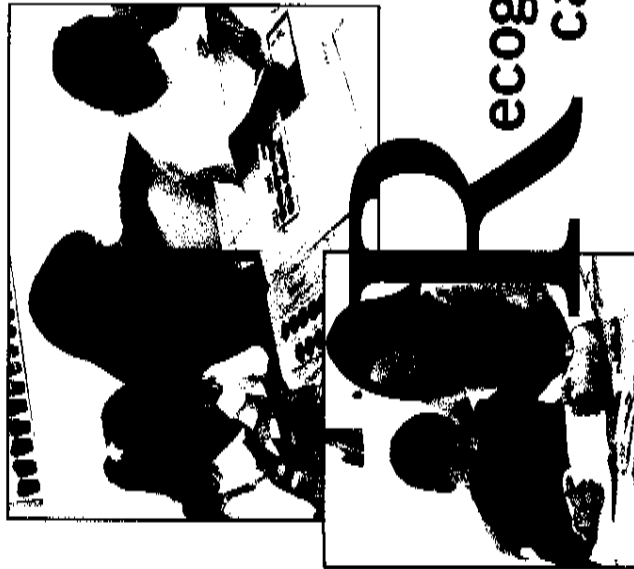
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
(816) 756-3390 ext. 287
E-Mail: tbeauchamp@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

Local VFW Post Information



**Smart/Maher
VFW National
Citizenship Education
Teacher Award**
Grades K-12





Recognize teachers who care about America

VFW Cares About Education

Founded in 1899, the VFW highly supports the education of America's youth. VFW and its Auxiliary have developed a slate of programs dedicated to helping America's educators. VFW Citizenship Education programs stimulate interest in America's history, traditions, Americanism, civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism.

VFW wants to identify and recognize America's best educators who instill a sense of national pride in students. It offers cash awards, commemorative plaques and all-expenses-paid trips to the VFW National Convention for these worthy teachers. The trip provides an opportunity for winners to network with like-minded individuals.

Teachers care deeply about America and its children. They're concerned about the perpetuation of America's noblest traditions and highest ideals. Wouldn't you like to see them get the honor they deserve? Now you can...

VFW annually recognizes the nation's top classroom elementary, junior high and high school teachers who teach citizenship education topics regularly and promote America's history and traditions effectively.

Teachers who promote civic responsibility, flag etiquette and patriotism are prime candidates for this award. For example, do you know a teacher who plans field trips to city hall or organizes community volunteer projects? Maybe you know an instructor who invites veterans into the classroom to discuss their military experiences. Perhaps you are familiar with a teacher who fosters the development of democratic values and beliefs through special projects. If you know of such a teacher, honor him or her today with the Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award.

How are teachers nominated?

Fill out the nomination form contained in this brochure. In 350 words or less, describe why you feel your nominee should be selected.

Describe the teacher's innovative teaching and resource development methods, as well as his or her dedication to education. Please submit your completed nomination form and signed essay to your local VFW Post. Visit www.vfw.org for Post locations or call VFW Programs Department at (816) 756-3390 ext. 287 to find the Post nearest to you.

All Post-level nominees, if they win, should provide a one-page resume, up to five pages of documentation of their teaching experience (references, news articles, etc.) and a head-and-shoulder photo of themselves. These items will be forwarded on to the District with the nomination form and essay.

When is the deadline?

Nominations must be submitted to your local Post by February 15. Judging occurs February 16-28.

What are the National awards?

Smart/Maher VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Awards include the items below:

- A national \$1,000 Past Commander-in-Chief John Smart award for each of the top K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 teachers for professional development expenses.
- \$1,000 award for each winning teacher's school.
- Plaques for both the winning teacher and school.
- An all-expenses-paid trip to attend the VFW National Convention.

NOTE: (Winners will receive a 1099-MISC as a result of their award and all-expense paid trip.)

Nominate Someone Deserving

Have a teacher in mind? Complete the nomination form and required essay, then submit it to your local VFW Post. The investment that a teacher makes in today's youth will be the dividends we will all reap from future leaders.

How Does the Contest Work?

Based on the nominees submitted, VFW local chapters called Posts, will recognize one outstanding teacher in grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Posts then submit these winners' names to their District-level judging, who will forward their winners to the Department (or state) level. After judging, each Department then forwards the names of its winners to VFW National Headquarters for consideration in the national awards contest.

Who is eligible?

All current classroom teachers (teaching at least half of the school day in a classroom environment) in grades K-12 are eligible. Previous national VFW winners and homeschool teachers are ineligible. Nominations can be submitted by fellow teachers, supervisors or other interested individuals (not relatives). Self-nominees are not eligible.

Patriot's Pen

2016-17 Theme

"The America I Believe In"

Student Entry Deadline: November 1, 2016

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing competition.
- Contact a local VFW Post within your local area within your state and indicate your interest in participating.
- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its VFW Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of Nov. 1, 2016. You can submit your essay and entry form electronically (by email) upon the Post's approval.

HOW AM I JUDGED?

You will be judged on how well you understand, develop and present the theme. A positive approach is recommended to express your viewpoint.

Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:

You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

Theme development is worth 35 points:

Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:

Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

WHAT IS THE THEME?

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme. The 2016-17 theme is **The America I Believe In.**

WHAT ARE THE RULES?

- Essay length: 300-400 typewritten words.
- You must write your own essay.
- All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics and cannot be less than 300 words or greater than 400 words in length. (Essays under or over these word amounts will be eliminated.) Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count. At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

In no way may contestants identify themselves within their essay (including, but not limited to, your name, school, city, state, race or national origin.) Do not put your name on your essay. The entry form is your essay's cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on

top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post competition). Contestants found in violation of this rule will face elimination from the competition and will be required to return any and all prize money awarded or received.

The essay must be a contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to use your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

DEADLINE INFORMATION

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring local VFW Post by midnight November 1, 2016.

Note --

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post in your area, follow these instructions:

First, visit this website <https://www.vfw.org/oms/findpost.aspx> to "Find A VFW Post." Be sure this Post is within the state you reside in.

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) headquarters office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit this link <https://www.vfw.org/ContactUs/> and look to the extreme far right side of that webpage (see the second grey box) for "VFW State Contacts" to get your VFW state office's phone number and e-mail. Some Departments have websites you can visit by visiting this link <https://www.vfw.org/Contacts/VFW-State-Department-and-District-Websites/>

If you still need assistance, please e-mail us here at VFW National Headquarters at kharmer@vfw.org.



Veterans of Foreign Wars & VFW Auxiliary
National Headquarters
Kansas City, Missouri
816-756-3390 ext 6117
E-Mail: kharmer@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

Revised 2/2016

LOCAL VFW POST INFORMATION :

CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____ **BEST TIME TO CALL :** _____

ALTERNATE CONTACT: _____

PHONE: _____ **BEST TIME TO CALL :** _____