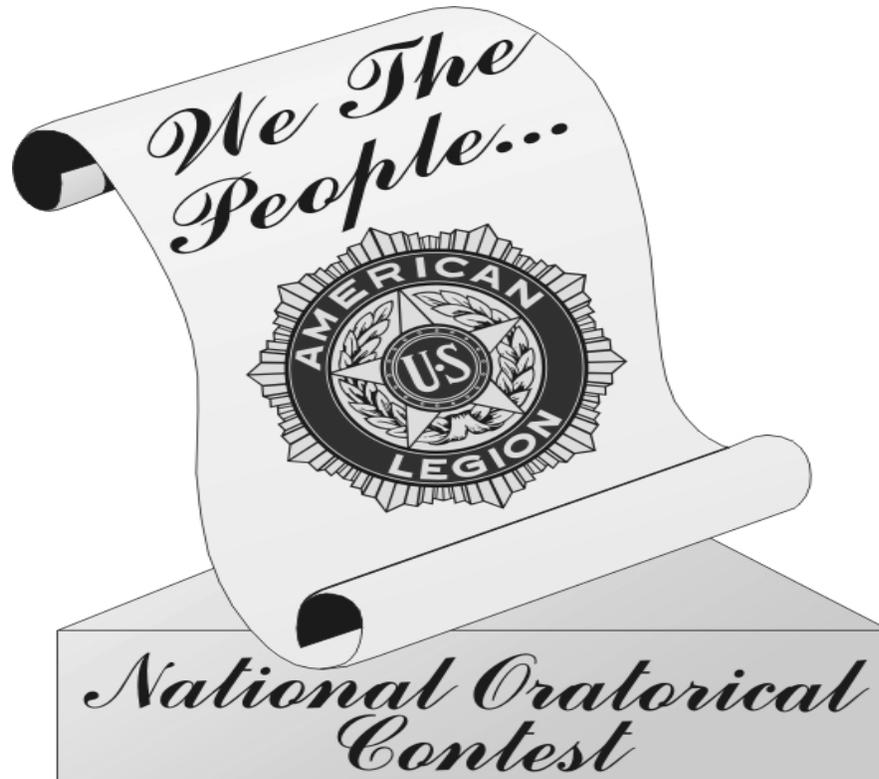


Annual American Legion Department of Iowa  
**High School Oratorical Scholarship Program**

"A Constitutional Speech Contest"

2025 – 2026



Open to students in grades 9 – 12

Scholarships are awarded to winners at Department and National levels:

Department Contest Prize*	Placement	National Contest Prize
\$2,000	First	\$25,000
\$1,500	Second	\$22,500
\$1,000	Third	\$20,000

The Department of Iowa Champion will also receive an additional \$2,000 for participating in the first round of the national competition.

\*Half of each Department of Iowa scholarship is awarded by The American Legion of Iowa Foundation.

For more information, contact: **The American Legion of Iowa**, 720 Lyon St., Des Moines, Iowa 50309  
1-800-365-8387 | [programs@ialegion.org](mailto:programs@ialegion.org) | [www.ialegion.org/oratorical](http://www.ialegion.org/oratorical)

## Rules and Regulations

### Eligibility

- All contestants must be citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States.
  - All orations must be in English.
  - The contest adheres to National American Legion Contest rules, with exceptions for the Department of Iowa contest as outlined below.
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### Contest Structure

The contest progresses through a series of levels:

- **Post/County:** Top two contestants from each post and county advances. If multiple contestants are from one county, a preliminary county contest will determine the representative.
  - **District:** Two contestants from each district advance.
  - **Area:** One contestant from each of the three areas (each consisting of three districts) advances.
  - **Department (State) Finals:** The winners from the three area contests compete in the finals.
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### Orations and Rules

- **Quotations:** Quotations must be indicated as such. If a quotation is more than 10 words, the author's name must be given orally and included in the manuscript.
  - **Withdrawals:** If a contestant withdraws voluntarily or by disqualification, their place will be taken by the next highest-ranking contestant from the previous contest. If this substitution can be made without delaying the contest, it should be done immediately.
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### Judging and Presentation

- **Judging:** If a local contest is necessary, contestants will be judged according to the local American Legion Post's standards. In all community, post, county, district, area, and department contests, the following rules apply:
- **Notes and Platform:**
  - **Post and County:** Notes on 3x5 cards are allowed, and judges should not downgrade contestants for using them.
  - **District, Area, and Department:** No prompting, notes, or lecterns are allowed. The contest will be held on a platform, if available, and the contestant's voice will not be amplified.
- **Assigned Topic:** For the Assigned Topic discourse at the district, area, and department levels, only a pad and pencil are permitted for preparation. No research materials are allowed.
- **Special Accommodations:** A blind contestant may have a chaperone in the room to read the Assigned Topic.

**The American Legion, Department of Iowa  
High School Oratorical Contest  
Certification Form – Section I**

**To be completed by the contestant’s Parent(s)/Guardian(s) and a High School Official**

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_ is a student at  
\_\_\_\_\_ High School/Home School, located in  
\_\_\_\_\_ (city), and is not undergoing post-graduate  
work, is not deficient in any school work for the current year, and is enrolled for the current school year.

**The participant is a citizen or lawful permanent resident of the United States.**  Yes  No

**Current Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Anticipated High School Graduation Year:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Official’s Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Official’s Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Official’s Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Official’s Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Certification Form – Section II – Post

To be completed by American Legion Post Officer and mailed to County/District Oratorical Chair

I, Commander of American Legion Post # \_\_\_\_\_, of The American Legion, Department of Iowa, located in \_\_\_\_\_ (city), do hereby certify that the student named in Section I is an official contestant of this post in The American Legion of Iowa High School Oratorical Contest and is eligible to advance to the next level.

The total number of contestants who participated at the post level is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Post Commander Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Post Oratorical Chair Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone & Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone & Email

### Certification Form – Section III – County

To be completed ONLY if a county contest is held.  
Completed by County Officer and mailed to District Oratorical Chair.

I, Commander of \_\_\_\_\_ County, of The American Legion, Department of Iowa, do hereby certify that the student named in Section I is an official contestant of this county in The American Legion of Iowa High School Oratorical Contest and is eligible to advance to the district contest.

The total number of contestants who participated at the county level is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Commander Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Oratorical Chair Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone & Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone & Email

### Certification Form – Section IV – District

To be completed by the District Oratorical Chair and mailed to the Area Oratorical Chair

I, Commander of the \_\_\_\_\_ District, of The American Legion, Department of Iowa, do hereby certify that the student named in Section I is an official contestant of this district in The American Legion of Iowa High School Oratorical Contest and is eligible to advance to the Area Contest.

The total number of contestants who participated at the district level is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
District Commander Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
District Oratorical Chair Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone & Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone & Email

### Certification Form – Section V – Area

To be completed by the Area Oratorical Chair and mailed to Department Headquarters

I, \_\_\_\_\_ Area Oratorical Contest Chair of Area \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby certify that the student named in Section I is an official contestant of this area in The American Legion of Iowa High School Oratorical Contest and is eligible to advance to the department contest.

The total number of contestants who participated at the area level is \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Area Oratorical Chair Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Area Oratorical Tabulator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone & Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone & Email

## Dates For The Contest

For accurate dates, times, and locations for District and Area Contests, please check online at [www.ialegion.org/calendar](http://www.ialegion.org/calendar) or [www.ialegion.org/oratorical](http://www.ialegion.org/oratorical).

<b>Local Contests:</b>	Must be completed by December 7, 2025
<b>County Contests:</b>	Must be completed by December 21, 2025
<b>District Contests:</b>	Must be completed by January 11, 2026
<b>Area Contests:</b>	Must be completed by January 25, 2026
	<b>*Host district indicated by <u>underlining</u> and <b>bold</b></b>
	<b>AREA I</b> – Districts 1, 5 & <b><u>6</u></b>
	<b>AREA II</b> – Districts 2, <b><u>3</u></b> & 4
	<b>AREA III</b> – Districts 7, 8 & <b><u>9</u></b>

## 2026 Department Finals

The American Legion Department of Iowa High School Oratorical Contest will be held **Sunday, February 15, 2026, at the Airport Holiday Inn on Fleur Drive in Des Moines, at 8:00 a.m.** All contestants will be required to report to the hotel on Saturday, February 14, 2026, by 6:00 pm.

The Department winner will advance to the National Contest in Hillsdale, Michigan at Hillsdale College.

## 2026 National Contest

The 2026 National Finals will be in Hillsdale, Mich., at Hillsdale College. The date is yet to be determined. Visit <https://www.legion.org/get-involved/youth-programs/oratorical-contest> for updates.

## Financial Information and Awards

### Contest Funding

The contest is funded by The American Legion Department of Iowa, The American Legion of Iowa Foundation, and various American Legion post, county, and district organizations. Post, county, and district awards are the responsibility of the host organization for that level.

### Awards and Expenses

**Area Contest:** Each participant in an area contest receives \$50 from the Department of Iowa for expenses.

### Participants Eliminated at the Area Contest:

- **\$200** for 2nd and 3rd place finishes.
- **\$100** for 4th, 5th, and 6th place finishes.

### Department (State) Contest:

- Each participant receives \$100 from the Department of Iowa for expenses.
- **1st Place:** \$2,000
- **2nd Place:** \$1,500
- **3rd Place:** \$1,000

*Any restrictions on the awards for the Department finals also apply to the area-level awards.*

For more information, contact: **The American Legion of Iowa**, 720 Lyon St., Des Moines, Iowa 50309  
1-800-365-8387 | [programs@ialegion.org](mailto:programs@ialegion.org) | [www.ialegion.org/oratorical](http://www.ialegion.org/oratorical)

## The American Legion Department of Iowa Oratorical Committee 2025 - 2026

**Marvin Carr, Department Chair**

(515) 835-9703

marvin.carr5@gmail.com

**Roger Hopwood, Department Vice Chair**

(641) 990-7968

rog-hopwood@windstream.com

**First District Chair**

**Roger Hopwood**

(641) 990-7968

rog-hopwood@windstream.com

**Second District Chair**

**Donald J Thiltgen**

(563) 659-9582

mrtillie@mchsi.com

**Third District Chair**

**James E Sanders**

(319) 389-8521

james@thesanders.com

**Fourth District Chair**

**Jeffrey L Hughes**

(757) 752-0600

jeffhughes1725@gmail.com

**Fifth District Chair**

**Darrin Alderson**

(641) 660-0527

darrin.alderson@gmail.com

**Sixth District Chair**

**Terry L Vandekamp**

(515) 720-7624

terrwnd@aol.com

**Seventh District Chair**

**Amy Jo Muse**

(712) 310-5598

amymuse.legion@outlook.com

**Eighth District Chair**

**Gary Schmitz**

(712) 830-3072

schmitzga@gmail.com

**Ninth District Chair**

**James Kessler**

(712) 832-3540

jm-kessler71@gmail.com

## Assigned Topics for 2025-2026 Oratorical Contest

<https://www.legion.org/get-involved/youth-programs/oratorical-contest/oratorical-contest-assigned-topics>

### **Amendment IV**

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

### **Article III**

*Section 3.* Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

### **Article IV**

*Section 4.* The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.

### **Article VI**

*Clause 3.* The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.