

2021 Civics Contest: What Does Being Part of the American Community Ask of Us?

Our Constitution gives us both rights and responsibilities. For example, the First Amendment of the Constitution gives us freedom of speech. That means we have the right to say what is on our minds. But that right has limits because we have a responsibility not to say anything that puts people in danger. So, we have the right to talk about fire, but we do not have the right to yell “**FIRE!**” in a crowd (unless there is an actual fire). If we yell “**FIRE!**” in a crowd, people might believe there is a fire and start panicking, and someone could get hurt. Our right to speak ends where our responsibility to keep each other safe begins.

When there is a crisis, governments must make hard decisions about how to balance rights and responsibilities. The pandemic provides a perfect example of just how hard those decisions can be. For example, the First Amendment to the Constitution gives people not only freedom of speech but the right “peaceably to assemble”. That means people have a right to have large get-togethers. But the government also has a responsibility to make sure people are safe. During the pandemic, large get-togethers are dangerous because the coronavirus is very contagious. Even within the same country, different state and county governments made different decisions about how to balance rights and responsibilities. Some governments made it a rule that everyone needed stay at home unless it was necessary to leave for something like groceries. Other governments limited get-togethers to a small number of people. Some governments let people make their own decisions about how to stay safe.

“What Does Being Part of the American Community Ask of Us?” is the theme of this civics contest. Students are encouraged to discuss this theme with reference to the Constitution, and to consider the examples identified above, or other relevant events in American history.

Individual students are encouraged to express their thoughts and ideas on the theme in creative ways. They can submit photography, artwork, poetry, or even a video of a dance, a short play, or an interview. If students choose to do a video, it should be limited to 3 minutes maximum. Regardless of what students create, a student should submit a written explanation of their creation that should be no longer than 350 words. Students can be involved in the production of only one creation.

The contest is open to middle students in Nevada. 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. Please include in your submission your full name, grade level, and then name of your school.

The winning pieces will be distributed, and videos shown, to several judges and lawyers working in Nevada. In addition, the first-place winner will receive \$250.00, the second-place winner will receive \$200.00, and the third-place winner will receive \$150.00.

The contest is sponsored by the United States District Court for the District of Nevada. All entries must be submitted electronically on or before 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time, April 16, 2021. If a student chooses to enter the contest by creating artwork, a photograph or video of the art needs to be submitted. Contest rules and entry forms are posted on the Court’s website at <https://www.nvd.uscourts.gov>.

Questions about the contest and submissions can be sent to the Clerk’s Office at AAFandCivics@nvd.uscourts.gov. Alternatively, participants may call Sharon Hardin with questions at (702)-464-5563.

Judging: Judging will be based on the following criteria:

1) Understanding of constitutional principles in explanation of submission **50%**

BREAKDOWN

a. Clarity and effectiveness in explaining how the submission meets the theme of the contest

25%

b. Grammar, spelling, and composition **10%**

c. Use of references to constitutional principles and examples in history or current events to explain your piece **15%**

2) Originality, quality, and creativity of the submission as it relates to the theme **50%**