

VFW Launches 79th Annual Youth Scholarship Contests

Middle and high school students compete for share of awards totaling nearly \$2.4 million

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. – The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is now accepting entries for its 79th annual Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen youth scholarship competitions. The 2025-2026 theme asks America’s students “How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for Our Country?”

Established in 1947, the VFW’s Voice of Democracy and Patriot’s Pen essay competitions were created to encourage a better understanding and appreciation for America and to foster patriotism among the nation’s youth. The programs also offer friendly competition as well as reward success in the form of individual scholarships and awards totaling nearly \$2.4 million at the national, state and local levels.

The Voice of Democracy audio-essay competition is open to high school students in ninth through 12th grades and comes with a national first place prize scholarship totaling \$35,000. More than 26,000 high school students worldwide compete in the competition each year for their share of more than \$170,000 in national awards.

First place Voice of Democracy Department (state) winners will also receive an all-expenses-paid trip to attend a [Founding Forward Spirit of America Youth Leadership program](#) at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Through this inspiring four-day program, students experience mock congressional debates, participate in a free enterprise challenge, visit historical sites, and engage in interactive educational activities.

The VFW’s Patriot’s Pen essay contest is open to eligible sixth, seventh and eighth grade students, with middle schoolers competing for their share of nearly \$1 million in local, state and national awards and prizes. The national first place winner receives a \$5,000 award. More than 60,600 students participate annually in the competition.

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Student entries may be submitted (along with a completed entry form) to their local participating VFW Post. The deadline for both contests is **Oct. 31, 2025**.

[Read more about the contests](#), or submit your essay and entry form at your local participating [VFW Post](#).