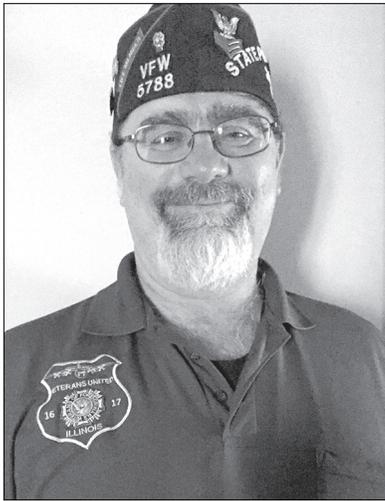


VOICE OF DEMOCRACY PROGRAM



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Post 5788-18

The 2020-2021 Theme is
“Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?”

Program Overview

The Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition is especially designed for high school students from grades 9 through 12 including home school students. It is a valuable educational experience for students and a wonderful opportunity for positive publicity for the VFW in your area schools and communities. The program dates back to 1946 and continues to be one of the VFW's most exciting programs. The VFW annually commits \$3 million in scholarships and incentives at the Post, District, State and National levels. Participants write and then record a three to five minute essay on a patriotic theme selected annually. The Voice of Democracy is endorsed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and is designed to foster patriotism in the participants and to enhance their written and oral communication skills. In addition, this program demonstrates to your local schools and community the VFW's interest in the youth of today.

Key Information for Posts

You may make this a joint effort with your Post Auxiliaries. Prior planning insures a high level performance. Start early! In August, send press releases to local newspapers announcing the 2020-2021 topic. Shortly after school starts, bring or send Voice of Democracy materials to local principals or a previously developed contact within the school. Remember that there are many home schooled students that can not be reached through the local schools, this makes media presence even more critical to the success of this program. Furthermore, please remember that entries need not come from schools (even if the student entering is NOT homeschooled). No Post “owns” any school for the purpose of Voice of Democracy entries, however, District Chairpersons should work with their Posts to insure efforts are not duplicated, resources are not wasted and “turf wars” don't start.

Make sure you have a core group of judges identified, selected and groomed well in advance of the Post judging. Always check your equipment before the judging begins to insure it functions properly.

Once the Post judging is completed, Chairpersons and Commanders should insure that the winner's materials are properly submitted to the District Voice of Democracy Chairperson. Please follow the District Chairperson's instructions regarding where, when and how entries are to be submitted. Do not forget to heap loads of recognition and praise on your Post Winner(s). Completing a press release for the local paper with a picture, as well as some prize for the winner(s) would be most appropriate.

Posts may advance their “winner(s)” based on the following schedule. Please follow any additional guidance that the District Chairperson may provide.

- 1-15 essays – One (1) entry to District
- 16-30 essays – Two (2) entries
- 31-45 essays – Three (3) entries (NOTE: no limit)

Key Information for Districts

District Chairpersons are urged to aggressively promote the Voice of Democracy Program. After coordination with your Auxiliary counterpart please reach out to every Post and Auxiliary in your District. Establish a quick, easy and effective line of communication between you and the Post Voice of Democracy Chairman/Commander. Consider using e-mail or social media for this purpose. As the District meeting is to be a School of Instruction, it would not be at all out of line for the Voice of Democracy Chairman to ask for time to train Post Voice of Democracy Chairmen and Commanders on the program requirements.

Districts may advance one winner to the State Competition. Be sure to forward your District Winner's entry material to State Headquarters to arrive no later than December 20, 2020. The winner's package **must** include the following:

1. Recorded Speech (Audio CDs or Flash Drives) -- **Please Note: Only audio CDs or flash drives.**
2. Typed copy of the speech
3. Entry form with all necessary signatures
4. Two glossy head and shoulder color photographs of your winner.
5. Introductory questionnaire

Please understand that all that information is critical both to comply with national requirements and to allow the printing of the program book distributed at the State Awards Banquet. If critical information is not received timely, I may need to contact your student directly even if you have not yet announced your district winner. Please send in a complete entry - including quality photographs - so this action is not required. The District Report Form listing the Post participation, awards and other monies spent is due December 30. District Chairmen will be mailed a copy of this form in the fall.

Key Dates (Please Note New Deadlines)

- October 31 - Student entries to post
 - November 15 - Post judging complete
 - Check on your District's due date
 - December 15 - District judging complete
 - December 20 - District winners due to the State Headquarters
 - January 10 - State Judging will be completed
 - January 15 - District Participation Report due to the State Headquarters
 - January 15 - Department winners due to National
 - January 31 - Department reports due to National
- February 13, 2021 State Voice of Democracy Awards Banquet, Springfield**

Prize Structure at the National and State Level

The winner from each state competition earns a trip to Washington DC and competes for national awards which range from a minimum \$1,000 up to \$30,000 for first place.

The State Awards are:

1 st Place - John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism Fund First Place Award in Memory of George G. Gorin, Jr	\$2,500 Cash
2 nd Place – George Cramer/Ray Soden Scholarship Award	\$1,500 Cash
3 rd Place – Terry L. McKinney Memorial Award	\$1,250 Cash
4 th Place – Dale & Catherine Clifton Award	\$1,000 Cash
5 th Place – Johnson Phelps Post 5220 Auxiliary.....	\$750 Cash
6 th Place – Jarnell/Ross Award.....	\$600 Cash
7 th Place – Dick Cosner Memorial Award.....	\$500 Cash
8 th Place – Vern & Lorraine Umphery, Post 6863 & L.A. Award.....	\$450 Cash
9 th Place – Robert C. Holysz Post 2200 Award.....	\$400 Cash
10 th Place – Grant-Parkholme Post 9115 Award.....	\$375 Cash
11 th Place – West End VFW Post 2004 Memorial Award.....	\$350 Cash
12 th Place - Chester Spears Memorial Award.....	\$325 Cash
All other District Winners will receive an award of	\$300 Cash

Districts and Posts wishing to become an Award sponsor should forward their donation of \$300 to Department Headquarters by December 1, 2020 earmarked V.O.D. Award Sponsorship. Thank you for this valuable support of the state program. Sponsorships will be awarded in the order received. Districts wishing to sponsor Annual VOD Pizza Party for 2020-2021 Champions can donate \$300 but their donation needs to be earmarked “VOD Pizza Party Sponsor” and the first District to respond will be awarded the Sponsorship. Districts wanting to sponsor other Voice of Democracy weekend events, such as the Student luncheon during Saturday’s Springfield tour or the tour of The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, should forward a donation of \$300 to Department Headquarters. The Donation should be earmarked Springfield Tour.

Each of the District Champions will be provided two nights free lodging in Springfield and one ticket to the Voice of Democracy Awards Banquet.

The Post sponsoring the State winner will receive a beautifully engraved plaque at the State Convention.

The school where the State winner attends will receive a \$500 award. In the event the student is homeschooled, the Department of Illinois VFW will donate \$500 to the charity of the parents’ choosing.

Resources

All information that is needed to conduct the programs are online now under “My VFW.” Visit this website <http://www.vfw.org/Login.aspx> where you can access all of the VFW’s Online Membership System (OMS) services available to our members and VFW leaders. After you log in (or create an account and log in), click on **CHAIRMAN GUIDES** under the **General Members Tools and Resources** heading. There you will find this “Scholarships Programs” manual and below that, you will find the following additional materials:

- 1.) “National Scholarship Brochure” (great to hand out to teachers when you speak to them and it explains to them what they need to do to get involved.)
- 2.) “How-To Guide for Promoting Youth Programs” (contains helpful information for newer Post Voice of Democracy or Post Patriot’s Pen Chairmen.)
- 3.) Voice of Democracy score sheet
- 4.) Patriot’s Pen score sheet

You can download and print the student entry forms for Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen by visiting the below links and clicking on:

Voice of Democracy: <https://bit.ly/30UN71g>

Patriot's Pen: <https://bit.ly/2A0m3Ge>

National's supply catalog has printed entry forms, posters and a wide variety of awards and gifts designed for use in the Voice of Democracy program. (800) 821-2606 or www.vfwstore.org.

The State Voice of Democracy Director and Assistant Directors are anxious to help your Post and District have its most successful Voice of Democracy program yet. If you have any questions about the Voice of Democracy, let us know. Our contact information is at the front of this section.

X Sheet Reporting

The Participation "X" for the Voice of Democracy will be posted in February based upon the report submitted by each District Voice of Democracy Chairman to the State Director. Commander Boyer and I encourage all Posts to actively participate in the Voice of Democracy Program. However, recognizing that some posts are just not able to generate a student entry, an "X" for Voice of Democracy can also be earned by making a donation (\$200 for Posts with 100 members or more or \$100 for Posts with fewer than 100 members). Send your check to the State Headquarters office by April 30, 2021 with a notation that it is for the Voice of Democracy program.

Promote patriotism in our youth through the Voice of Democracy program as we celebrate "100 Years of Veterans Service."



Voice of Democracy Introduction Questionnaire

Representing VFW Post _____ and its Auxiliary,
a _____ at _____
GRADE (FRESHMAN, SOPHOMORE, JUNIOR, SENIOR) SCHOOL NAME
in _____
CITY

STUDENT'S NAME

The student is the Son/Daughter of

Mother: _____

and

Father: _____

2020-2021 Theme “Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2020

Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$30,000 Award

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, nearly 57,000 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, **Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?**

Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level.

The Rules

Who can enter?

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12 by the Oct. 31 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 dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. 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 youthscholarships@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.

2020-21 Official Entry Form Voice of Democracy Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

()

Phone

Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade in School

Age

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)

To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian
(required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

()

Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's Email

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

2020 - 2021 Theme

“Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2020

Official Rules for Students Advancing to National Level

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

VFW Post Email

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 Email

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.

Department Chairman's Signature

() _____
Daytime Phone Email

The winner has been will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on _____.

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. Entries sent to VFW National will be returned. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. If you need help finding a participating VFW Post in your area, follow these instructions: First, visit this website vfw.org/FindaPost 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 vfw.org/ContactUs and look for "Find a State Contact" to get your VFW state office's phone number and email. If you still need assistance, please email us at VFW National Headquarters at youthscholarships@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, **Oct. 31, 2020**. 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.



For assistance contact:
816.756.3390 ext. 6155
Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org
vfw.org

Revised 3/2020

LOCAL VFW POST INFORMATION:

CONTACT: _____

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

ALTERNATE CONTACT: _____

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

SUMMARY

DISTRICT VOICE OF DEMOCRACY PARTICIPATION REPORT

DISTRICT NO. _____

DEPARTMENT OF _____, VFW

The VFW Posts and Auxiliaries identified in this report in this District participated in the VFW annual Voice of Democracy Program.

GRAND TOTALS FOR POST COMPETITION: list totals taken from District report form(s)

_____	_____	_____	_____
Posts	Auxs	Students	Post Winners Advanced
\$ _____		\$ _____	
Scholarships & Awards		Addl. Money Expended	

MONETARY VALUE OF DISTRICT COMPETITION (add County Councils if applicable):

District Scholarships & Awards \$ _____

District Additional Expenses \$ _____

Signed by: _____ Date _____

District Chairman

***PLEASE ATTACH COMPLETED REPORT FORM(S) AND GIVE
THIS COMPLETED SUMMARY TO YOUR DEPARTMENT
VOICE OF DEMOCRACY CHAIRMAN***

