

# VOICE OF DEMOCRACY PROGRAM

The 2021-2022 Theme is  
"America: Where Do We Go From Here?"

## 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 students, teachers, schools, and for the VFW in your community. 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 audio-essay on a patriotic theme selected annually. The Voice of Democracy Program 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 the VFW's willingness to partner with local schools and the community.

## Key Information for Posts

You may make this a joint effort with your Post Auxiliary. Prior planning insures a high level performance. Start early! In August, send press releases to local newspapers announcing the 2021-2022 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 ensure 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 ensure 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. Unless otherwise directed, you will need to submit items 1-5, that are listed below under Key information for Districts. Note that there is a link provided there to access those documents. Do not forget to heap loads of recognition and praise on your Post Winner(s). Completing a



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Post 3912-12

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: Each additional 15 essays entitles another entry. The number of schools participating does not affect the number of entries allowed)

### **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 the State VOD Director, with cc to State Headquarters to arrive no later than December 20, 2021. The winner's package must include the following:

1. Recorded Speech (on Flash Drive or Emailed)
2. Typed copy of the speech
3. Entry form with all necessary signatures
4. Two glossy head and shoulder color photographs of your winner are acceptable but a good quality digital photo is much preferred. Photos taken by a smart phone are acceptable and can be easily emailed.
5. Introductory questionnaire

(Comrades, email is the preferred method of submitting entries. A flash drive with all information is also perfectly acceptable. If that is foreign to you please recruit someone to help you. Please know that I will take them the old fashion way if necessary.)

The following link will allow you to access the documents required for submission of your entry or entries. The documents are fillable for your ease and for legibility concerns. All documents can be downloaded and emailed including your student's audio script, typewritten essay, and digital photo which can also be emailed. Email entries are fast, eliminates expensive postage and the risk of lost mail. Documents can also be copied as needed. Documents can be found on the state website at [www.vfwil.org](http://www.vfwil.org) (click on resources and scroll down to Voice of Democracy) Depending on your email provider, the file with all information may be too large to send in one email. If that is the case, I suggest that you send the audio essay and written essay in one and the rest of the information in a second consecutive email.

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 and District Participation report form are due December 30 and are included in the link above.

## 2021-2022 Illinois VFW Commander's Leadership Manual

### 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 12, 2022 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 <sup>st</sup> Place - John H. Emery Youth, Pageantry and Patriotism Fund First Place Award in Memory of George G. Gorin, Jr .....	\$2,500 Cash
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place – George Cramer/Ray Soden Scholarship Award .....	\$1,500 Cash
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place – Terry L. McKinney Memorial Award .....	\$1,250 Cash
4 <sup>th</sup> Place – Dale & Catherine Clifton Award .....	\$1,000 Cash
5 <sup>th</sup> Place – Johnson Phelps Post 5220 Auxiliary.....	\$750 Cash
6 <sup>th</sup> Place – Jarnell/Ross Award.....	\$600 Cash
7 <sup>th</sup> Place – Dick Cosner Memorial Award.....	\$500 Cash
8 <sup>th</sup> Place – Vern & Lorraine Umphery, Post 6863 & L.A. Award.....	\$450 Cash
9 <sup>th</sup> Place – Robert C. Holysz Post 2200 Award.....	\$400 Cash
10 <sup>th</sup> Place – Grant-Parkholme Post 9115 Award.....	\$375 Cash
11 <sup>th</sup> Place – West End VFW Post 2004 Memorial Award.....	\$350 Cash
12 <sup>th</sup> 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, 2021 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 2021-2022 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.

### Additional Resources

All the information that is needed to conduct the PP/VOD programs is online at [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org). After you log in, (or create an account and log in), click on My VFW and then on the VFW Training and Support heading. There you will find a wealth of information about VFW programs! Scroll down and click on Community Service & Youth Activities for more information specific to Voice of Democracy.

You can download and print the student entry forms for Voice of Democracy at the National website also by visiting the below links and clicking on:

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

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](http://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. Department Commander Welch 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, 2022 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 "Mission First - Veterans Always."

# VOICE OF DEMOCRACY



## 2021-2022 Theme "America: Where do we go from here?"

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2021

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, **America: Where do we go from here?**

### 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, to tour the city, be honored by the VFW and its Auxiliary and receive their portion of \$154,000 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 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.) audio essay and submit the recording, typed essay and completed entry form 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](mailto: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 and 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.

### 2021-2022 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

#### Participant Agreement 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, as a guest of the VFW National Organization. In consideration for permission to participate in the National Voice of Democracy Competition ("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 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 Competition and/or arising out of any travel related to 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 audio file, essay, name and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.







## 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

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRONUNCIATION OF STUDENT'S NAME

The student is the Son/Daughter of

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

and

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

**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*



