



## **Oratorical Scholarship Program**

*“A Constitutional Speech Contest”*

The purpose of the Oratorical contest is to provide high school students with a deeper knowledge and understanding of the Constitution of the United States. Other objectives of the contest include the development of leadership qualities, improving speaking skills, and acceptance of the responsibilities as well as the privileges of American citizenship. Contestants will compete for scholarship money ranging from **\$1,000 to \$2,000** at the department(state) contest conducted on Saturday, March 28, 2026 at Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing. The department winner will advance to compete for scholarship money ranging from **\$20,000 to \$25,000** in the National contest held May 15-17, 2026 in Hillsdale, Michigan.

A contestant is encouraged to be sponsored by an American Legion Post but it is not required. If you don't know of an American Legion Post to ask for sponsorship, contact the Department Programs Coordinator by e-mail at [legion@michiganlegion.org](mailto:legion@michiganlegion.org) or by phone at (517) 220-2754 for assistance.

A contestant must register with the American Legion, Department of Michigan by Monday, December 5, 2025. Once you have registered with the Department of Michigan your information will be forwarded to your Zone Chairman and they will notify you of the dates, times and locations of all contests at the District and Zone level. All District contests are to be completed by January 25, 2026 and Zone contests will be conducted before February 22, 2026. The Department contest will be conducted on Saturday, March 28, 2026 at a location the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing.

### **Eligibility: To participate in the Oratorical Contest you must meet the following eligibility requirements:**

1. Contestants shall be citizens of or lawful permanent residents of the United States.
2. Have a permanent residency in the state of Michigan
3. Be enrolled in an accredited high school (public, parochial, military, private) or an accredited home-schooled program.
4. Be in grades 9th, 10th, 11th, or 12th and not older than 20 years-of-age.

### **What you should know:**

- **Apparel:** Contestants may wear appropriate business attire but wearing uniforms, awards, or medals are not permitted.
- **Travel Expenses:** Department will pay mileage to and from the State Contest for only the first-place winner of each Zone contest. All contestants must be accompanied by a chaperone over 21 years of age.
- **Speaking Order:** A drawing will be held to determine the order in which the contestants will present their prepared oration and their assigned topic (two different speeches). Until the end of the contest, they will be introduced and known to the judges by number only.
- **Notes or Podium:** The use of notes, amplification devices, lectern, prop's or speaker's stand by contestants is **not** permitted.
- **Judges:** The judges are an integral part of the contest and are selected based on their qualifications. The decision of the judges is final. Five judges are used in the process, which ultimately results in the selection of the state champion each year.

## **What to Prepare:**

**The prepared oration:** The Prepared Oration must be as follows:

- Given at each level of competition (District, Zone, State, National) and must be on some aspect of the Constitution of the United States with emphasis on the duties and obligations of a citizen to our government but not the preamble.
- Contestant's oration must be his or her own original speech.
- Spoken in the English language.
- Speech length is no less than 8 minutes and no more than 10 minutes.
- Songs in a speech are not permitted.
- Quotations may be used and indicated as such but quotes 10 words or more in length will need the author's name given in your written manuscript and cited orally.

**The assigned topic:** The purpose of the assigned topic is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of his or her research, and the ability to discuss the topic as related to the basic principles of government under the Constitution. The assigned topic must be as follows:

- Assigned Topic (listed below) will be one of the articles and sections or amendments of the Constitution of the United States.
- Spoken in the English language.
- Speech length is no less than 3 minutes and no more than 5 minutes.
- Songs in a speech are not permitted.
- Quotations may be used and indicated as such but quotes 10 words or more in length will need the author's name and cited orally.

The assigned topic will be drawn by the contest official in full view of the audience immediately before the last speaker begins delivery of his/her prepared oration and will be made known to the audience and each contestant approximately five minutes prior to the time of delivery.

### **ASSIGNED TOPICS FOR THE 2026 PROGRAM**

#### **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.

## **State Oratorical Contest**

The following information only applies to the State Oratorical Program:

- The State (Department) program will be held on March 28, 2026 at the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing. Starting time is 12:00 P.M.
- Scholarships are as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> Place- \$2,000, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place- \$1,500, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place- \$1,000
- All Zone winners should arrive by 11:00 a.m. to allow for a short walk through of the facilities.
- The winner of the State Contest will advance to the National Finals Contest (information is below)

If you have any further questions please contact the Department Programs Coordinator by e-mail at [legion@michiganlegion.org](mailto:legion@michiganlegion.org) or by phone at (517) 220-2754 for assistance.

## **National Finals Contest**

The following information only applies to the National Program:

- National program held May 15-17, 2026. Quarterfinal and semifinal contests are scheduled for Saturday, May 16 with the finals scheduled for Sunday, May 17
- National Contest will be held in Hillsdale, Michigan at Hillsdale College.
- All contestants must be accompanied by a chaperone over the age of 21.
- All contestants and chaperones will arrive on Friday May 15, and will be lodged on the Hillsdale College Campus.
- Mandatory pre-contest orientation session for all contestants will be held on Friday evening.
- Banquet honoring all contestants will be held Sunday afternoon, May 17.
- All contestants and chaperones will depart for home late Sunday afternoon, May 17.

**DEPARTMENT ORATORICAL REGISTRATION FORM IS ONLINE AT**  
**[WWW.MICHIGANLEGION.ORG/ORATORICAL](http://WWW.MICHIGANLEGION.ORG/ORATORICAL)**

**For a copy of the complete 2026 Official Rules, go to:**  
**<https://www.michiganlegion.org/oratorical>**