



NATIONAL SOJOURNERS, INC. AMERICANISM PROGRAM RESOURCE SHEET YOU-02 ESSAY CONTEST

1. INTRODUCTION:

a. GENERAL: Americanism and Patriotism in youth must be cultivated and nurtured. Part of our purpose as National Sojourners is to spread Americanism, and the National Essay Contest is one of our primary vehicles to do that. The annual National Sojourners, Inc. *Essay Contest* provides a wonderful WIN-WIN-WIN challenge and opportunity for students to research, learn, compose, and even earn a prize for their effort. The Essay Contest program provides an opportunity to stimulate the young minds that do the writing (WIN), involve the “older” minds that do the grading (WIN), and recognize their local or national winners (WIN). What a treat! This National Americanism Committee sponsored program is available to all chapters as a key part of our commitment to *Proudly Serving the Cause of Patriotism*. It is clear, however, that the Essay Contest must be brought to life by a chapter commitment to make it an integral part of its youth outreach efforts!

b. CONTESTANTS: The Essay Contest is open to all high schools’ students in grades 9 through 12.

c. PRIZES: A 1st, 2nd and 3rd Place national prize shall be awarded as follows:

Prizes

1 st Place	\$3000 Check and National Sojourners Plaque
2 nd Place	\$2000 Check and National Sojourners Plaque
3 rd Place	\$1000 Check and National Sojourners Plaque

2. ANNUAL THEME AND APPLICATION FORM: The Essay contest kicks off annually each spring with the publication of the **ESSAY CONTEST FORM and AUTHORIZED COVER SHEET** (CLICK ON the highlighted current year in **BOLD** below to download a PDF copy). *Essays submitted for the national contest shall be mailed to the National Secretary and postmarked no later than 15 January — NO EXCEPTIONS!*

2002-2003: The Pledge of Allegiance

2003-2004: Old Glory

2004-2005: The American's Creed

2005-2006: American Heroes

2006-2007: National Expansion

2007-2008: The Benefits of Space Exploration

2008-2009: Patriotic Quotes

2009-2010: U. S. Presidents on Your Facebook.

2010-2011: Patriotic Song

2011-2012: Arlington National Cemetery

2012-2013: The American's Creed

2013-2014: Most Critical Branch of Government

2014-2015: Star-Spangled Banner – The Song

2015-2016: America's Historical Documents

2016-2017: G. Washington's Thoughts on Patriotism Today

2017-2018: Ensure that our "more perfect union" will continue to flourish.

2018-2019: With exception of 4 July, what is most pivotal moment or event in the history of our country

2019-2020: Describe a person you know, or know of, who also personifies one of the Points of Light and has made a difference in your community through their service and sacrifice

2020-2021: Your plan to take your place in the American Experiment

2021-2022: As a young adult, what have you learned this past year that will help you overcome the challenges in the future?

2022-2023: Describe a document, law, Supreme Court Decision, or an Amendment to the Constitution that has had a similar impact both in our country and to the community of nations.

3. GUIDELINES:

a. GENERAL: This section provides some guidelines for developing a Chapter Essay Contest program. Note that some chapters use the Essay Contest to identify the student(s) who will receive their Youth Leadership Conference scholarships.

b. ESSAY CONTEST PLAN:

(1) **CHAPTER ESSAY CONTEST ACTION OFFICER/COMMITTEE:** After making a commitment to use the Essay Contest, the chapter should appoint an Action Officer and Committee to plan, implement and serve as chapter judges for the contest.

(2) **START EARLY:** The annual **ESSAY CONTEST FORM and AUTHORIZED COVER SHEET** is usually published in the early spring. Take advantage of this fact and START EARLY—so that you may wrap up your contest by December!

(3) **REVIEW THE RULES:** First and foremost, the ACTION OFFICER/COMMITTEE should review this AMERICANISM PROGRAM RESOURCE SHEET (YOU-02); download the ESSAY CONTEST FORM / AUTHORIZED COVER SHEET; and carefully REVIEW the rules and submission requirements for the national contest so that they are prepared to answer all contest questions raised by any contestant. Be sure to set a chapter submission date for completed Essays early enough to permit selection of the chapter finalist for submission as entries for the National Contest—and make sure that the chapter submission date is communicated to each contestant. Each chapter may submit up to three (3) entries for the National Contest.

(4) **FINDING PARTICIPANTS:** Contestant sources include all highschools' students in grades 9 through 12. Sources of students include local high schools (check with the school guidance counselor for assistance in promoting the contest); Masonic Youth organizations; JROTC Units; Boy and Girl Scout Troops; and family members of the Chapter Brethren.

(5) AVOIDING ESSAY CONTEST DISQUALIFICATION:

(a) PAST CONTEST RESULTS SUMMARY:

Year	Chapters	Essays	Year	Chapters	Essays
2001	Did not track	41	2022	17	26
2002	Did not track	28	2023		
2003	Did not track	40	2024		
2004	Did not track	41	2014		
2005	Did not track	57	2025		
2006	21	46	2026		
2007	15	26	2027		
2008	23	51	2028		
2009	14	27	2029		
2010	14	27	2030		
2011	Did Not track				
2012	16	38			
2013	58	96			
2014	32	58			
2015	48	81			
2016	27	48			
2017	20	40			
2018	16	33			
2019	19	36			
2020	26	34			
2021	15	26			

(b) ESSAY DISQUALIFICATION RATE (DQ): The total number of essays and Chapters participating has soared — but we must keep a watchful eye on the DQ rate!!! In the past we have had many outstanding essays DQ'd for lack of adherence to the rules. One such problem has been the lack of adherence to word count. There have been many other small points too, all of which could have been overcome by following the instructions on the "Authorized Cover Sheet." The rules must be adhered to! While all essays (including those disqualified) are read, the three winners are chosen from those essays that meet all of the requirements. Since many of the DQ'd essays are very creative and well done, all involved in the Essay Contest must insure that proper attention is given to rule compliance. Accordingly, chapters are urged to review the essay submissions for rules compliance and corrected if needed before submitting them to the National Headquarters. This action will help insure that we do not disappoint any participating student.

(c) THE RULES: In order for an Essay Entry to be to be QUALIFIED it is necessary

that the contestant READ and COMPLY with all of the rules printed on the ESSAY CONTEST FORM and AUTHORIZED COVER SHEET. All essays must now be typed, and the student's full name must appear on the first page of the typed essay. PLEASE EMPHASIZE COMPLIANCE WITH THE RULES TO ALL CONTESTANTS to avoid disqualification!!!

c. FOLLOW-UP: Make sure that all National Contest entries comply with the rules and are submitted in compliance with the national due date requirements. Many chapters reward every student entering an Essay with a copy of the United States Constitution. Some inexpensive sources are listed below. Following announcement of the National 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners, it is good practice to invite one or more of your chapter's national entry winners (and their families) to be the guest of the chapter so that they may read their essay—and, if they are a national winner, present them their national prize. Taking pictures of these events and providing articles for publication in the *SOJOURNERS MAGAZINE* is a must!

POCKET CONSTITUTION SOURCES

(1) National Center for Constitutional Studies – 100 for \$35.00
www.nccs.net/products/other-products/pocket-constitution.php

(2) Constitution Facts.Com – 100 for \$125.00_
www.constitutionfacts.com/us-pocket-constitution/?gclid=CKjuzfrDw8sCFQERaQodwxwDIA

(3) The CATO Institute – 10 for \$10.00_
<https://store.cato.org/book/cato-pocket-constitution-10-10>

4. FEEDBACK/QUESTIONS: As with all of our National Americanism Programs, your constructive chapter feedback is useful and appreciated. Submit all comments and recommendations to the National Americanism Chairman directly or via the National Secretary. Your National Americanism Chairman will be happy to address all questions as well.