

## 2025 NINTH CIRCUIT ESSAY CONTEST

*When Duty Calls: Why Exercising the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship is Important to Me*

**Who May Enter:** The 2025 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest is open to high school students residing in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Washington state, the U.S. Territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Students in the 9th through 12th grades attending public, private, parochial and charter schools, and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status, are invited to participate. Children of federal judges, chambers staff and employees of federal court offices are not eligible to participate.

**Prompt: “When Duty Calls: Why Exercising the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship is Important to Me”**

What is the thing you prize the most? The possession you would never give away? Never put someplace you couldn't find it? Maybe you are thinking computer, phone, fancy jewelry, favorite childhood stuffie or something like that.

But how about your rights? As a U.S. citizen, you are guaranteed fundamental rights under the U.S. Constitution and the laws of the United States. Hand in hand with those rights come serious responsibilities to our nation and our society.

The 2025 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest prompt challenges you to dive into the rights and responsibilities of being a U.S. citizen and explore deeply how they affect you and how you can affect them. There is no one correct way to answer the prompt and no specific rights you are expected to highlight. Here are a few questions that may help ignite your investigation. It is up to you to express your thoughts on this civics journey. Dive in!

- Which right or rights are you most excited to exercise when you reach the age of majority—18—or become an adult citizen through naturalization? Why?
- What constitutional rights can you exercise now? Have you exercised any of these, and what has it meant to you? Do you have plans to exercise any others?
- Are there any ways you can influence the exercise of constitutional rights by adults for those rights you cannot yet access yourself? Have you done this, and how?
- Why does the contest pair “rights” with “responsibilities” and state they go hand in hand?

**Length and Format:** Individual students can express their thoughts and ideas in an essay of between 500 and 1,000 words. Footnotes and bibliographies are not included in the word count. **Essays must be uploaded as a Word or PDF file attachment** at <https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>. When completing the online form to prepare uploading your essay, you will see instructions on how to

upload your essay. You will receive an email confirmation only after you upload your essay successfully. Make sure your email address is correct before you complete the process of submitting your essay. A student who is submitting an essay is not required to submit a video. You have the option to submit an essay and a video but can only submit one of each.

**Contest Duration:** Entries will be accepted starting Jan. 8, 2025. **Deadline for entries is 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time, March 7, 2025.** Finalists will be announced in May and winners in June.

**Judging Criteria:**

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| 1. | <b>Understanding of constitutional principles</b><br>Essay demonstrates clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship, providing legal and/or historical examples | <b>40 points</b> |
| 2. | <b>Clarity and effectiveness in expressing the theme</b><br>Essay organizes and communicates concepts and ideas clearly  | <b>30 points</b> |
| 3. | <b>Grammar, spelling and composition</b><br>Essay uses correct spelling, proper grammar and sentence composition   | <b>25 points</b> |
| 4. | <b>Use of footnotes, bibliography</b><br>Essay properly identifies and attributes information taken from other sources   | <b>5 points</b>  |

**Release Forms:** If you are selected as one of the finalists, you will be required to submit a release form allowing the Ninth Circuit to publish your essay in print publications and/or on public websites of federal courts throughout the circuit. Contest winners will be required to provide and authorize use of photographs and/or videos of themselves in contest-related promotional materials.

**Disqualification:**

- (1) **Original Work:** All contest submissions must be original work. Students may not use artificial intelligence (AI), to generate content for their submissions. AI systems search engines may be used only for research purposes. A submission that plagiarizes in any way, including by copying or paraphrasing someone else’s work without proper citation, or using or paraphrasing any amount of AI-generated content, will be disqualified.
- (2) **Compliance with Other Contest Requirements:** Providing any false information, failing to meet the submission deadline or adhere to other contest rules, or failing to provide a requested release form may also result in disqualification.

**Questions:** Contact Katherine M. Rodriguez at [civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov).

<https://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>

## 2025 NINTH CIRCUIT VIDEO CONTEST

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**Prompt: “When Duty Calls: Why Exercising the Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship is Important to Me”**

What is the thing you prize the most? The possession you would never give away? Never put someplace you couldn't find it? Maybe you are thinking computer, phone, fancy jewelry, favorite childhood stuffie or something like that.

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- Which right or rights are you most excited to exercise when you reach the age of majority—18—or become an adult citizen through naturalization? Why?
- What constitutional rights can you exercise now? Have you exercised any of these, and what has it meant to you? Do you have plans to exercise any others?
- Are there any ways you can influence the exercise of constitutional rights by adults for those rights you cannot yet access yourself? Have you done this, and how?
- Why does the contest pair “rights” with “responsibilities” and state they go hand in hand?

**Length and Format:** Individual students, or teams of up to three students, can produce a 3-5 minute video (not including end credits). Submit as MOV, MPEG4, MPEG2 or WMV file. Resolutions of 720x486 pixels to 1920x1080 pixels are acceptable. Files may not exceed 1GB. Videos should be compressed using the H.264 codec. Video entry must be uploaded at

<http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>. When completing the online form to prepare uploading

your video, you will see instructions on how to upload your video entry. If entering as a team, make sure to include all members of your team and their contact information. Make sure to complete the entry process and complete the required information online. You will receive an email confirmation only after you upload your video successfully. Make sure that your email address is correct before you complete the process of submitting your video. A student submitting a video is not required to submit an essay. You have the option to submit a video and an essay but can only submit one of each.

**Contest Duration:** Entries will be accepted starting Jan. 8, 2025. **Deadline for entries is 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time, March 7, 2025.** Finalists will be announced in May and winners in June.

**Judging:** Judging will be based on the following criteria.

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|----|--|------------------|
| 1. | <b>Understanding of constitutional principles</b><br>Video demonstrates clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship, providing legal and/or historical examples | <b>30 points</b> |
| 2. | <b>Video exhibits originality and creativity,</b><br><i>in a manner connected to the theme</i>   | <b>25 points</b> |
| 3. | <b>Video engages the viewer on emotional/subjective level,</b><br><i>in a manner connected to the theme</i>  | <b>25 points</b> |
| 4. | <b>Video displays good production values</b><br>Audio/video quality and editing  | <b>10 points</b> |
| 5. | <b>Respects copyright rules or demonstrates creativity in use of the student or team’s own artistic and creative abilities</b><br>Properly credits content resources                           | <b>10 points</b> |

**Release Forms:** If you are selected as one of the finalists, you will be required to submit a release form allowing the Ninth Circuit to display your video at public events or public websites of federal courts throughout the circuit. Contest winners will be required to provide and authorize use of photographs and/or videos of themselves in contest-related promotional materials.

**Disqualification:**

- (1) **Original Work:** All contest submissions must be original work. Students may not use artificial intelligence (AI) to generate content for their submissions. However, AI systems search engines may be used for research purposes. Any form of plagiarism will result in disqualification. Plagiarism includes copying or paraphrasing someone else’s work without proper citation as well as using or paraphrasing AI-generated content.
- (2) **Compliance with Other Contest Requirements:** Providing any false information, failing to meet the submission deadline or adhere to other contest rules, or failing to provide a requested release form may also result in disqualification.

**Questions:** Contact Katherine M. Rodriguez at [civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov).

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