

SCHOLARSHIPS

- * Student Participation
- * Recipient Recognition
- * Community Awareness
- * Increasing the Fund



2024-2025

**Department of Maryland
Scholarships Chairman**

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2024-2025 SCHOLARSHIPS PROGRAM

Student Participation + Recipient Recognition + Community Awareness + Increasing the Fund

What are the Auxiliary Scholarships?

Continuing Education: This scholarship is open to any Auxiliary member of at least one year, their spouse, their son, or their daughter, who is at least 21 years of age, with financial need. One applicant in each of the Conferences will win an award of \$1250. The deadline for National to receive the application is February 15, 2025.

Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest and **3-Dimensional Art Contest:** These contests are open to all students in grades 9 through 12 who are enrolled in a public, private, parochial high school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions, or is a dependent of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. U.S. citizenship is not required, but the student must be a lawful U.S. permanent resident and intend to become a citizen of the U.S. The deadline for both of these contests is March 31, 2025 to the local VFW Post.

What are the VFW Scholarships?

The VFW Auxiliary assists the VFW in sponsoring two essay contests.

2024-2025 VFW Voice of Democracy Audio-Essay Contest

theme: **“Is America today, our forefather’s Vision?”**

This contest is open to students in grades 9 through 12 who are enrolled in a public, private, or parochial 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. U.S. citizenship is not required, but students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents and intend to become U.S. citizens. The deadline for entries to be delivered to their local VFW post is October 31, 2024.

2024-2025 VFW Patriot’s Pen Essay Contest

this year’s theme: **“My Voice in America’s Democracy?”**

This contest is open to students in grades 6 through 8 who are enrolled in public, private or parochial school or home study program in the United States, territories or possessions, or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Same citizenship policy as VOD contest. The deadline for entries to be delivered to their local VFW is October 31, 2024.



The first step... ...is to get the word out!

...Go to the VFW Auxiliary website:
vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships and read up on each contest.

...Identify “points of contact” within your local schools, home-school associations, youth sports teams, scout troops, and church youth groups.

...Use social media – Facebook, Twitter, your VFW/VFWA website to promote the contests.

...Work with English teachers, scout leaders, coaches, ministers, and parents to encourage their students to enter the contests.

...Print applications for each of the contests to be ready for distribution to contestants.

...Promote the contests in your local newspapers and on local radio.

Scholarships Program Timeline

June: Pick up program material at School of Instruction.

July: Review the packet, and check out the website. Report your activity.

August: Start contacting schools, Scout troops, etc.

September: Drop off entry forms at schools, churches, etc. Report your activity.

October: Collect essay entries by October 31, 2024 and deliver to your Post for judging.

November: Deliver your winners to District. Report your activity.

December: Enjoy the holidays!

January: Attend the Department VOD-PP Awards Ceremony.

February: Advise Continuing Education Scholarship applicants to send their forms directly to National by February 15, 2025. Report your activity.

March: Accept Young American Creative Patriotic Art and 3-Dimensional Art delivered to post by March 31, 2025.

April: Forward art projects to Department by April 15, 2025. Send final report by April 15, 2025.

Recognition is the key to success!

Ways to recognize your winners:

- Host an awards ceremony at your post or district.
- Present your winners with a gift or certificate.
- Invite the winners to an auxiliary meeting and ask them to lead the Pledge of Allegiance or to read their essay.
- Plan to present awards at the school during an assembly.
- Present your awards at a Scout meeting.
- Contact the local newspaper to feature your winners.
- Use the sample press release found on MALTA.
- Recognize the parents of the winners.
- Recognize the teachers of the winners.





Young American Creative Patriotic Art Awards

How can you help the Scholarships Program?

To donate to the **Patriotic Art Escrow Fund**, you can log in to MALTA and click on “Make a Gift” – then select ***Patriotic Art***.

Or

Mail your check to:

VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters
ATTN: Patriotic Art Scholarship Fund
406 W. 34th Street
10th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64111

Note on your check: for ***Patriotic Art***

2024-2025 Theme

“Is America Today Our Forefathers’ Vision?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2024

Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$35,000 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 27,000 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 America Today Our Forefathers’ Vision?**”

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 DC, to tour the city, be honored by the VFW and its Auxiliary and receive their portion of \$171,000 in national awards, the top scholarship being \$35,000.

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, GED or Adult Education Students are ineligible.

What do I need to enter?

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or – 5 second max.) audio essay on a flash drive, or other electronic device. You will submit the recording, typed essay and this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or 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. Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed. 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.

Where Do I Submit My Entry?

All entries begin at the 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 VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. 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, follow these instructions: First, visit this website vfw.org/FindaPost to “Find A VFW Post.” 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 <https://www.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, 2024**. 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.

2024-2025 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

Jacket Size

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 Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian 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.

I Have Read and Understand the Rules and Participant Agreement

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have not inappropriately used any AI tools or Chat GPT. 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

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/Chairperson Signature

Post #

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson 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 Departments.

District Chairperson Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

()

Phone

Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature

()

Daytime Phone

Email

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

For assistance contact:

816.968.1155

Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: _____

Phone: _____

Best Time To Call: _____

Alternate Contact: _____

Phone: _____

Best Time To Call: _____



2024-2025 Theme

“My Voice in America’s Democracy?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2024

Patriotic Written Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$5,000 Award

What is the Patriot’s Pen Program?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 73,000 students who participated last year in this contest.

Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, State and national level. Department (State) winners receive a portion of \$55,000 in national awards. National Winners will receive at least \$500. **The first-place national award is currently \$5,000.**

The Internal Revenue Service requires a recipient awarded more than \$599 be given Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable income. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

How Does the Contest Work?

All entries begin at the 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 VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where the one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition.

Who Can Enter?

Patriot’s Pen is open to 6th, 7th and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. (Foreign exchange students are ineligible.)

How Do I Get Started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot’s Pen writing contest.
- Contact a participating VFW Post and indicate your interest in participating.

- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its VFW Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of October 31, 2024. You can submit your essay and entry form by email upon the Post’s approval. Entries sent to the VFW National Headquarters directly will be returned.

How Am I Judged?

Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:

You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

Theme development is worth 35 points:

Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:

Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

What Is the Theme?

VFW’s Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year’s theme. The 2024-2025 theme is:

“My Voice in America’s Democracy?”

Deadline Information.

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring VFW Post by midnight October 31, 2024.

Note:

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions:

First, visit vfw.org/FindaPost to “Find a VFW Post.”

If you don’t have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble contacting them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) headquarters office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit vfw.org/contactus to look for “Find a State Contact” to get your VFW state office’s phone number and email.

For assistance contact
the VFW National Headquarters
at 816.968.1155
Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org

2024-2025 Official Entry Form Patriot's Pen 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

Essay Word Count

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

What Are the Rules?

- You must write your own essay.
- All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics. 300 - 400 words in length (+ or - 5 word max). Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.
- In no way may contestants identify themselves within their essay (including, but not limited to, your name, school, city, state, race or national origin.) Do not put your name on the essay. The entry form is your essays cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post competition).
- The essay must be contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to the use of your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.
- At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

I Have Read and Understand the Contest Rules

Signature of Student Participant

Date

To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Patriot's Pen Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature

Post#

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (If applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of participants _____

No. of winners _____

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarships 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 Patriot's Pen Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Department.

District Chairperson Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

(____) _____

Phone

Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Patriot's Pen Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature

(____) _____

Daytime Phone

Email

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

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____

Alternate Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____



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Scholarships

2024 - 2025 Report Form

JoAnne Bierly , Department Chairman

765 Jacob Tome Memorial Highway

Port Deposit, MD 21904

443-907-3929 jobierly69@aol.com



Auxiliary _____ District _____ Month _____ Chairman _____

Reporting Period: From _____ To _____

This month - Hours _____ Projects Cost \$ _____ Mileage _____ Volunteers # _____

VFW SCHOLARSHIPS

Did you assist your Post in conducting the Patriot's Pen Essay Contest? Yes _____ No _____

Did you assist your Post in conducting the Voice of Democracy Audio/Essay Contest? Yes _____ No _____

Did your Auxiliary host/co-host an awards ceremony to recognize awardees and participants in any of these contest?

Yes _____ No _____

Total dollar amount and/or value of awards you presented. \$ _____

CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

Did you promote the Continuing Education Scholarship Contest? Yes _____ No _____

Did you make a monetary donation to the Continuing Educations Scholarship fund? Yes _____ No _____

YOUNG AMERICAN CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST

Did you promote the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest? Yes _____ No _____

_____ # of student entrees Did you submit an entry to the Department for judging? Yes _____ No _____

Did you make a monetary donation to the Young American Creative Patriotic Art Fund? Yes _____ No _____

3-DIMENSIONAL PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST

Did you promote the 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest? Yes _____ No _____

_____ # of student entrees Did you submit an entry to the Department for judging? Yes _____ No _____

Did you make a monetary donation to the 3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Fund? Yes _____ No _____

Other Scholarships projects or activities (use additional sheet if necessary):