

2025 MCS Library Essay Question:

In 1952, Senator Joseph McCarthy was at the height of his political power due to his baseless witch hunts in search of subversive communists working within the United States Federal Government. That same year Senator Margaret Chase Smith gave a speech to the National Newspaper Editorial Association as tension continued to mount during the red scare. She noted, "Suspicion and division...petrifies our country, our people, and our thinking today. This suspicion and division, that has been bred by irresponsible name-calling motivated by selfish political desire" Furthermore the Senator stated, "Freedom of Speech has become more of a hollow phrase now than a vibrant reality. People don't dare speak their minds for fear that mere expression of difference of opinion will make them targets for smears."



Our current cultural and political landscape is rife with misrepresentation, hate speech is on the rise, and people are verbally attacked on various fronts. Much of this is occurring under the guise of "Freedom of Speech." Keeping in mind that Americans have historically had differing viewpoints about personal freedoms, The Margaret Chase Smith Library invites students to provide their opinion on what are the rights of speakers in the public square. Should people be allowed to express anything they desire no matter the ripple effect their words may cause? Or, should there be limitations on speech? If so, how far is too far? Please provide specific historical and/or contemporary examples in support of your argument. Citations should be in MLA or Chicago format.

Prizes:

- First Place - \$1000
- Second Place - \$500
- Third Place - \$250
- Five Honorable Mention Prizes - \$50

Contest Rules:

- It is open to **Maine high school seniors only**.
- Essays must be typed and double-spaced.
- For publication purposes, essays should be **no longer than 2000 words**.
- Quality of evidence, argumentation, and writing is more important than quantity of pages.
- The best essays support personal opinions with historical context and cited facts.

Submission Instructions:

- Entrants need to provide the following information:
 - A Reliable Email
 - Mailing Address (School or Home)
 - Phone Number
 - Name of School
- Essays are due **April 4, 2025**. Prizes will be announced by May 6, 2025.
- Electronic submissions can be emailed to john.m.taylor@maine.edu or hard copies should be **UNSTAPLED** and mailed to the following address:

Margaret Chase Smith Library
Attn: John Taylor
56 Norridgewock Ave
Skowhegan, ME 04976

You can sample past prize-winning entries at: <http://www.mcslibrary.org/awards>.

For further information email John Taylor at john.m.taylor@maine.edu.