

2025-2026 Theme

“How Are You Showing Patriotism And Support For Our Country?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2025

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 60,000 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 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 intend 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 Oct. 31. You can submit your essay and entry form electronically 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 2025-2026 theme is:

How Are You Showing Patriotism And Support For Our Country?"

Deadline Information.

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

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 816.968.2787
Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org**

2025-2026 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.
- To ensure fairness and impartiality in judging, essays must be anonymous. Please do not include your name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of your essay. Additionally, avoid references to your race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal your identity. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. However, personal identifiers tied to your individual background or experience should be avoided.
- 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 Veteran's 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 _____.

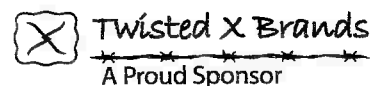
Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____

Alternate Contact: _____

Phone: _____ Best Time To Call: _____



SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
LORI JUSZKIEWICZ, CHAIRMAN
11 Tribune Lane – Red Hook, NY 12571
Phone (203)490-7512 – Email: lorijus@yahoo.com



Please help spread the word about this very important program!!!!
Reach out to local schools, private institutions, churches, parent organizations, and other youth groups.

The Scholarship program offers significant financial support for higher education, covering tuition and related expenses. Scholarships are available for students in grades 6-12. This is a fantastic opportunity to promote patriotism while aiding students in achieving their full potential. For application forms and detailed rules for all contests, please contact Department Chairman, Lori Juskiewicz or at www.vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships.

2025-2026 VOICE OF DEMOCRACY- Audio Essay Contest

Theme is: "How Are You Showing Your Patriotism And Support For Our Country?"

The Voice of Democracy is a 3-5 min audio essay contest that is open to students in grades 9-12, including those who attend public, private, or who are homeschooled. Students must be a resident of the state where their essay is entered. One Dept winner will be forwarded on to the VFW National Headquarters.

DEADLINES: All entries must be received at the local Post level by midnight **OCTOBER 31, 2025**. Post judging to be completed by **NOVEMBER 15, 2025**. District judging to be completed by **DECEMBER 15, 2025**, Department judging to be completed by **JANUARY 10, 2026**. The Department winner will be forwarded to VFW National Headquarters by **JANUARY 15, 2026**

NATIONAL AWARDS: 1st place \$35,000 scholarship, 2nd place \$ 21,000 scholarship, 3rd place \$15,000 scholarship, 4th-36th place \$7,000 to \$1,500 scholarship, 37th-53rd place \$1000 scholarship. The 1st place winner will enjoy an all-expense paid trip to Valley Forge for the Founding Forward Spirit of America Leadership Program..

2025-2026 PATRIOT'S PEN ESSAY CONTEXT

Theme: "How Are You Showing Your Patriotism And Support For Our Country?"

The Patriot's Pen is a 300-400-word written essay contest, open to students in grades 6-8, including those who attend public, private, or who are homeschooled. Students must be a resident of the state where their essay is entered. One Department winner will be forwarded to VFW National Headquarters.

DEADLINES: All entries must be received at the local Post level by midnight **OCTOBER 31, 2025**. Post judging completed by **NOVEMBER 15, 2025**. District judging by **DECEMBER 15, 2025**. One winner will be forwarded to Department. Department judging will be completed by **JANUARY 10, 2026**. One Department winner will be forwarded to VFW National Headquarters by **JANUARY 15, 2026**.

NATIONAL AWARDS: 1st Place \$5,000; 2nd \$4,000; 3rd \$3,500; 4th-53rd \$ 2,750 - \$500

CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP

A well-kept secret that shouldn't be a secret at all!!!! This scholarship is open to any VFW Auxiliary member who has been a member for at least one year, their spouse, son, or daughter with a financial need. Entrant must be at least 21 years of age, complete the application and submit an essay of 300 words or less. The application must be received by **FEBRUARY 15, 2026**. The Continuing Education Scholarship is \$1,250 and is awarded to one winner in each of the four Conferences. Applications must be received at Auxiliary National Headquarters by **FEBRUARY 15, 2026**. Program awards Administrator, VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters 406 West 34th Street – 10th Floor – Kansas City, MO 6411

** This is VFW Auxiliary National President Lois Callahan's special project for her year, as Continuing Education is close to her heart. At one time, she benefited from such a scholarship. Donations to the National President's Special Project can be made in MALTA under the "Gifts" tab.

YOUNG AMERICAN CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST AND 3-DIMENTIONAL CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST.

These Contests are open to students in grades 9-12 who are enrolled in public, private, parochial high schools, or those who are home schooled in the United States and its territories. Entries will be judged on patriotic theme, creativity, and technique. One Department winner will be forwarded to VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters. More information and application are available from the Department Scholarship Chairman, National website: www.vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships or in Malta.

DEADLINES: All entries must be received at local VFW Auxiliary by **MARCH 31, 2026**. Local Auxiliary judging to be completed by **APRIL 10, 2026**. District judging is optional. Department judging to be completed by **APRIL 15, 2026**. Must be forwarded to National Headquarters by **MAY 5, 2026**.

YOUNG AMERICAN CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST NATIONAL AWARDS

1ST PLACE \$15,000, 2ND PLACE \$7,500, 3RD PLACE \$3,500, 4TH PLACE \$2,500, 5TH AND 6TH PLACE \$1,500, 7TH AND 8TH PLACE \$1,000, 9TH-19TH PLACE \$500

3-DIMENTIONAL CREATIVE PATRIOTIC ART CONTEST NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

1ST PLACE \$2,500, 2ND PLACE \$1,000, 3RD PLACE \$500

DEPARTMENT AWARDS: In all four contests: VOD/ Patriot's Pen / 3-D ART /Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contests

First Place winners: \$150 and plaque

Second Place winners: \$100

Third Place winners: \$50

NATIONAL AWARDS FOR AUXILIARIES

Most creative and/or unique activity and/or event educating their community about the scholarship opportunities in the VFW and VFW Auxiliary

- Citation and \$25 to one Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most creative and/or unique activity and/or event

Entry form is required and available in Malta Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the Department Chairman by **April 15, 2026** for judging.

Department Awards: See page 4 of this Guidebook.

"ALWAYS STAY TRUE TO OUR RED, WHITE, AND BLUE"

