2026 TCBA Law Day Speech Topic

TREASON



This year, we celebrate the
250th birthday of the Declaration of Independence
and the birth of the United States of America.



The **Declaration of Independence**, provides, in part, that,

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

"That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes;…But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security."

Article III, Section 3 of the **Constitution of the United States** provides that,

"Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court."

Question:

Had England won the Revolutionary War, should the signers of the Declaration of Independence, individuals who aided and supported the American Colonists, and those who fought for the United States been charged with treason against England (had England had the same law regarding treason as defined by Article III, Section 3, of the Constitution of the United States)? Why or why not?

Choose your position on treason. Support your reasons and arguments using facts, law, historic context, and specific data to substantiate your position.

* * *

The speech should be approximately five to seven minutes long. There will be a preliminary round on Thursday, April 16, 2026, at 5:00 pm that will take place at Thurston County Superior Court on the main Thurston County Courthouse Campus (2000 Lakeridge Drive SW, Olympia). The top three speeches will advance to a final round on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at a West Olympia Rotary lunch from noon to 1:30 pm at the Viewpoint Room below Tugboat Annie's Restaurant (2100 West Bay Drive NW, Olympia). The total prize money is $2300.00 and will be awarded by the Thurston County Bar Association (TCBA) to the top three speeches ($1000 for 1st place, $800 for 2nd place, and $500 for 3rd place) and each of the three winners will receive a plaque from the West Olympia Rotary Club. This speech contest is open to all high school students in Thurston County.

Deadline: You must notify the TCBA of your intent to participate in the speech contest no later than 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 14, 2026.

Please email your intent to participate with your name, grade, school, and contact information to tcba.info@gmail.com. If you have any questions, please contact Heather at the Thurston County Bar Association at tcba.info@gmail.com.