METHODS OF JUDGING

Zone and state contests have five judges. Lower contests may have three or five judges. Judges should be trained or experienced in public speaking, and (preferably) previously judged speech contests. Judges should not have judged a prior contest including the contestant, or be employed by a school represented by a contestant. Arrangements for judges are made by the Chair of each contest, who should brief the judges before the contest. A judge should not discuss anything about the contest with a contestant before the contest.

During the contest, judges are seated separately. Each judge individually ranks the contestants without consulting anyone else. Judges must use and follow the scorecard on the preceding page.

If the prepared oration or assigned topic ignores the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen, the contestant may be penalized up to 10 points. Judges also downgrade contestants if parts of the assigned topic discourse appear overly "canned."

The Judges, Timekeepers, Tabulators, and Chair, following the last speech, may proceed to a private room for final tabulation.

Tabulators check each scorecard and then tally the rankings. The contestant receiving lowest total rankings (*not* total points) is the winner. (For example, if contestant #1 receives two firsts, two seconds, and a third on the judges' score cards, the total score is 9. If contestant #2 receives two firsts, two seconds, and a fourth, the total score is 10. Though contestant #2 receives two firsts, the total score of 10 places second.)

In contests with five judges, if two contestants have the same rankings total, the tie is broken by the rankings of the five judges for the two contestants. One contestant wins by three judges' Record of Choice – comparing only the rankings of the two top contestants. Total points do *not* break a tie between two contestants.

If three (or more) contestants receive the same rankings total, the tie is broken by the highest total points from all judges. Total points are used only when three (or more) contestants tie on total rankings. In the rare case of a tie on points as well as on rankings, the judges will meet, compare scores and arrive at consensus rankings, which are final.

CERTIFICATION OF CONTESTANTS

Each high school (or home school) may select, in any reasonable way, a contestant to represent it. High school (or home school) contests are preferred in order to increase participation.

A contestant, to advance, must be certified the winner of each prior contest beginning with the high school (or home school). Certification must be made in writing or by e-mail to both the COMMISSION Chair and the CHAIR of the next contest.

If a contest has only one contestant, that student advances to the next higher level. If a winner is disqualified, withdraws, or cannot compete, then the runner-up may advance. If a substitute contestant would delay the contest, the contest shall proceed among available contestants.

The Commission supplies forms to certify contestants. Other written certifications are acceptable if equivalent information is provided. Electronic certification is available for high schools or home schools at **www.missourilegion.org/oratorical**.

OTHER CONTEST RULES

Publicity – The names of contestants may be released to the media for publicity purposes. Interviews or photographs of contestants are prohibited before the contest. No publicity shall be given to the judges before the contest, who are introduced only after announcement of their decision.

Broadcasts – Television and radio recording is permitted if the normal speaking voice of the contestant is not interfered with or amplified within the auditorium, the lighting and other conditions are the same for all contestants, and the Legion is not obligated financially. Satisfactory arrangements for recording must be made in advance with the Chair of the contest and with the person in charge of the building. Recording shall not change the contest schedule, nor distract the contestants. Any other electronic/digital data gathering, receiving and/or transmitting equipment shall not be used by contestants or audience members during the contest.

Copies of Prepared Oration – Contestants in the district, zone, and state contests shall give the Chair two printed copies of their prepared oration, which clearly show the title. Contestants may possess and consult a copy of their oration until exiting the holding room to speak, when they must leave the copy in the holding room.

Dress – Contestants shall not wear uniforms, or awards and medals from previous competition. Business attire is recommended for all contestants.

Notes and Rostrums – Contestants may not use notes, speaker's stands, or amplification systems while speaking. Prompting is not allowed, nor props of any kind.

Applause – The Chair at each contest shall try to prevent applause until all contestants speak, so that speakers are judged on merit.

Order of Speaking – Contestants speak in the order determined by a drawing conducted with the Chair, who will refer to the speakers only as Number 1, Number 2, etc.

Announcement of Winner – The Chair does not introduce the contestants by name until after the judges finish all scoring. The Chair announces only the first place winner and alternate, or only those contestants receiving actual awards.

Time Keeper – The Chair names an official timer to keep an accurate time record of each contestant. The timer shall sit on the main floor in full view of the contestants. The timer has a stop watch and time cards with the figures 3, 4, 5 and 6. Timing starts when the contestant starts speaking. When 5 minutes pass in the Prepared Oration, the card with the figure "5" is placed in full view of the speaker, followed by the "6" card at the end of 6 minutes. During the Assigned Topic, the timer uses cards with the figures 3, 4 and 5. (Time cards with the figures 8, 9 and 10 are used for the Oration in the State Finals.) The Chair announces the time immediately after each speech, for the benefit of the judges. The Chair also announces penalty points then, if any.

Escorts – Immediately before the prepared orations, all contestants enter a separate room with an Escort appointed by the Chair, so the other orations cannot be heard. Contestant #1 then goes to the platform for delivery of the oration, following which he or she retires to the separate room. Each student in turn speaks and returns to the room, then all contestants return together to the platform.

Assigned Topic – Immediately before the last prepared oration, the Chair places in separate envelopes the text of the four Assigned Topics, and asks someone in the audience to draw one. The Article or Amendment drawn is the topic for all contestants, but is not then announced. The Chair reads the topic to the judges and audience after the last oration.

Assigned Topic Preparation – Approximately five minutes before delivery of the assigned topic, contestant #1 is first shown the topic and taken to a private room, with an escort who ensures that the contestant does not consult anything except the actual words of the topic.

Each contestant is called in order of previous appearance. Each, also in turn, is shown the topic and escorted to the private room for five minutes, just like contestant #1.

Tabulators – The Chair appoints at least three Tabulators to compile and check the judges' scorecards before handing them to the Chair. The Chair and the Tabulators shall not divulge the judges' scorecards to anyone at the site of the contest. Persons interested in the scoring, for professional purposes, may request, from the commission Chair, copies of the scores of a contestant (with judges' names omitted).

MISSOURI NATIONAL WINNERS

1949	Paul T. Heyne	Concordia
2011	Anisha N. Gururaj	Chesterfield
2013	Agnes G. Rieger	Kansas City
2014	Ashwath S. Kumar	Columbia

MISSOURI STATE WINNERS

1935	Everett Grese	Concordia
1936	Thomas Tierney	St. Louis
1937	Charles Brown	Springfield
1938	Carl Kenagy, Jr.	Raytown
1939	Kenneth Hackman	Brentwood
1940	Olin W. Venable	Boonville
1941	James J. Jenkins	Maplewood
1942	Maurice Kraxberger	Salisbury
1943	Ed Keath	Clayton
1944	Richard B. Dempsey	St. Louis
1945	Patrick O'Mera	St. Louis
1946	Howard Downs	Independence
1947	Robert A. Southern	Independence
1948	Robert Wallace	Springfield
1949	Paul T. Heyne	Concordia
1950	Kenneth Lee Frerking	Concordia
1951	Martin E. Palmer	St. Louis County
1952	Monty Harlow	Springfield
1953	David Morton	Kansas City
1954	Thomas Hungerford	St. Louis
1955	Leonard Goodall	Warrensburg
1956	Kenneth R. Jennison	Carthage
1957	Jeana Sue Herl	Hannibal
1958	Robert Dickeson	Independence
1959	June Lynne Skaggs	Monett
1960	David J. Wynne	St. Louis
1961	John H. Garabedian	Kansas City
1962	Sandra Lee Appleby	St. Charles
1963	Bond R. Faulwell	Kansas City
1964	John Willibrand	St. Charles
1965	David Hilgendorf	St. Louis
1966	Robert Thedinger	Kansas City
1967	Robert Thedinger	Kansas City
1968	Gary Klingsporn	Monett
1969	John W. Head	Palmyra
1970	Susan J. Dye	Hannibal
1971	John W. Head	Palmyra
1972	Joyce Meier	Farrar
1973	Robert Banks, Jr.	Monett
1974	Debbie O. Downs	Manchester
1975	Joy Anita Haven	Manchester
1976	Donald A. Calvert	Cape Girardeau
1977	John F. Gillespie, Jr.	Manchester
1978	Charles J. Rupp	Diamond
1979	Allan H. Harvey	Rolla
1980	Brenda Tompkins	Bolckow
1981	Glen Dasmalchi	Mansfield
1982	Kevin W. Smith	North Kansas City
1983	Rodney Sexton	Ava
1984	Patrick Walker	Grandview
1985	Sam M. Coring	Springfield
1986	Catherine M. Kintner	Jackson
1987	Marty Tade	Columbia
1988	Rachel L. Bringer	Palmyra
1989	Bryan D. Watson	Milan
1990	Ted W. Beasley	St. Louis
1991	Lisa S. Williams	Manchester
1992	Brian W. Prewitt	Ballwin
1993	Amy E. Smith	Warrenton
1994	Tina Suneja	Town and Country
1995	Tina Suneja	Town and Country
1996	Karen M. Barmann	Maryville
1997	Bradley W. Cordes	Raytown
1998	Erin K. Guyer	Ballwin
1999	Arif H. Kamal	Warrensburg
2000	Edward C. Shelton	Kansas City
2001	Ashley S. Oppenheim	Ballwin
2002	Ashley S. Oppenheim	Ballwin
2003	Jared R. Wortman	Warrensburg
2004	Afrin N. Kamal	Warrensburg
2005	Alexandra K. Hunstein	Ballwin
2006	Michael E. Gertz	Sedalia
2007	Cody L. Clemons	Malta Bend
2008	Brittany M. Sanders	Gladstone
2009	Brittany M. Sanders	Gladstone
2010	Derek W. Schulze	Warrenton
2011	Anisha N. Gururaj	Chesterfield
2012	David A. Rogers	Warrensburg
2013	Agnes G. Rieger	Kansas City
2014	Ashwath S. Kumar	Columbia
2015	Meghana C. Bharadwaj	Wildwood
2016	Meghana C. Bharadwaj	Wildwood
2017	Lorinda A. Ruz	Independence
2018	Makaylah L. Jones	Maryville
2019	Marissa M. Gertz	Smithton
2020	Andrew R. Moore	Kahoka
2021	Vignesh Kumar	Columbia
2022	Evan T. Becker	St. Charles
2023	Jana A. Rawashdeh	St. Peters
2024	Jana A. Rawashdeh	St. Peters
2025	Gretchen M. House	Oldfield
2026	Tess S. Lehman	Taylor

THE AMERICAN LEGION
DEPARTMENT OF MISSOURI, INC.

Ninety-Third Annual
High School Oratorical Scholarship Program

A CONSTITUTIONAL SPEECH CONTEST

2026-2027

Judge Duane Benton, Chair
Oratorical Commission, P.O. Box 179
Jefferson City 65109
services@missourilegion.org

ZONE I

Larry J. DuFour (636) 441-7102
106 Mill Run Lane. . . . . St. Peters 63376
Christine A. Sapp (573) 469-3461
608 Appaloosa Dr. . . . . .Ashland 65010

ZONE II

Mark M. Hummer (816) 390-4521
12820 Jantzen Ln . . . . . Platte City 64079
Stephen J. Olson (660) 831-0982
423 E. North St . . . . . Marshall 65340

ZONE III

Patricia C. Olmstead (417) 684-7512
1005 S. Main St . . . . . El Dorado Springs 64744
David E. Shafer (573) 528-9170
14325 Camden Ln . . . . . Dixon 65459

ZONE IV

Darlene Coats (314) 477-6841
5389 Wells Avenue. . . . . St. Louis 63112
John L. Midkiff (636) 207-0626
1277 Mautenne Dr. . . . . Ballwin 63021

www.missourilegion.org/oratorical

THE AMERICAN LEGION Department of Missouri, each school year, sponsors an Oratorical Contest for high school students in Missouri.

The purpose of the contest is to develop knowledge and appreciation of the United States Constitution, the ability to think and speak clearly and critically, and the acceptance of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship. The contest meets guidelines of the Missouri State High School Activities Association, and appears in the Advisory List of Contests and Activities, of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The Legion contest is a partner with the National Speech & Debate Association, the honor society for high school students (formerly the National Forensic League).

AWARDS

The Department of Missouri awards the following medals and scholarships at State Finals:

1st place . . . . . Gold Medal **$5,000.00**
2nd place. . . . . Silver Medal **$2,500.00**
3rd place. . . . . Silver Medal **$2,250.00**
4th place. . . . . Silver Medal **$2,000.00**

Zone
1st place . . . . . Gold Medal
2nd place. . . . . Silver Medal
Others. . . . . .Bronze Medal

District
1st place . . . . . Silver Medal
2nd place. . . . . Bronze Medal

County award . . . . . Brooch

Missouri's champion competes in the National Finals in May, earning a **$2,000** scholarship in the first round, and **$2,000** more if qualifying for the second round. The three National finalists earn scholarships of **$25,000, $22,500, and $20,000** and qualify for the National Speech & Debate national tournament. Some colleges and universities (including Drury University and William Jewell College) offer additional scholarships based on participation in the Oratorical Contest.

SCHEDULE OF CONTESTS

Contest **Date**

High School . . . . . Before November 30, 2026
County . . . . . Between December 6 and 21, 2026

My date _____

District . . . . . Before January 18, 2027

My date _____

Zone . . . . . Before February 8, 2027

My date _____

State Finals . . . . . On Sunday, March 7, 2027

Most Contests are on a Sunday Afternoon

PREPARED ORATION

Each contestant delivers a prepared oration, which must be an original effort. Plagiarism may cause disqualification.

The oration must address some aspect of the Constitution of the United States, which emphasizes the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen to our government. A student shall use the same subject for the oration throughout all contests.

The oration in all contests, except the State Finals, must last between five and six minutes. The oration in the State Finals must last between eight and ten minutes. The same oration must be used by the state winner in the national contest. The title of the oration is announced by the contest Chair before each oration.

Quotations must be clearly indicated. If they exceed ten words, the author's name shall be given both orally and in the manuscript. All speeches are delivered in English (except for short phrases from other languages). Singing is not permitted (although songs may be quoted).

ASSIGNED TOPIC DISCOURSE

Contestants in the district, zone, and state contests give an Assigned Topic Discourse, in addition to a Prepared Oration. The discourse lasts between three and five minutes. The oration quotation rule must be observed.

The discourse tests the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of research, and the ability to relate the topic to the basic principles of the Constitution. All contestants speak on the same topic, drawn during the contest from the four listed on the next page.

DELIVERY TIME

	Prepared Oration		Assigned Topic	
	Not Less Than	Not More Than	Not Less Than	Not More Than
School, County	**5 min.**	**6 min.**	**–**	**–**
District & Zone	**5 min.**	**6 min.**	**3 min.**	**5 min.**
State Finals	**8 min.**	**10 min.**	**3 min.**	**5 min.**

If a contestant speaks less than the minimum or more than the maximum time, a penalty of one point for each minute (or fraction thereof) is deducted from the contestant's total score.

ASSIGNED TOPICS – 2027

THE PREAMBLE

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

ARTICLE VI PARAGRAPH 2

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

AMENDMENT XIV SECTION 3

No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

AMENDMENT XXII SECTION 1

No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of the President more than once. But this Article shall not apply to any person holding the office of President when this Article was proposed by the Congress, and shall not prevent any person who may be holding the office of President, or acting as President, during the term within which this Article becomes operative from holding the office of President or acting as President during the remainder of such term.

ORGANIZATION

The contest is supervised by the Oratorical Commission of nine members appointed by the Department Commander. The Commission is the final authority on all aspects of the contest.

The state is divided into four zones:
Zone 1 - Legion Districts 1, 2, 8 and 9
Zone 2 - Legion Districts 3, 4, 5 and 7
Zone 3 - Legion Districts 6, 15,16 and 17
Zone 4 - Legion Districts 10, 11/12, 13 and 14

Each District Commander appoints County Chairs and a District Chair. The Commission appoints the four Zone Chairs. Each Chair cooperates with the local schools and Legion Posts to promote the program; to supervise generally the contests in the area; and, in addition, to preside at the particular contest he or she chairs.

ELIGIBILITY

All contestants shall be citizens or lawful permanent residents of the United States, bona fide students under age 20, and presently enrolled in grades 9 through 12, in a high school or junior high school (public, parochial, military, home or private). Contestants must either be legally domiciled in, or attend school within Missouri. Contestants may enter the contest in only one state. Students who graduate early may compete if not enrolled in a college, university, trade school, or other institution of higher learning on March 7, 2027.

The three finalists in the National Finals cannot compete again at any level.

SPONSORSHIP

Contests are sponsored and financed by The American Legion Department of Missouri, Inc., and the Legion Posts throughout the State.

Posts sponsor and assist the contestants from their local high schools. If no Post is near a high school, or if a contestant is not sponsored by a Post, then the Commission, upon request, will assist the contestant.

Posts of each county unite to sponsor the county champion at the district contest. Posts in each district sponsor the district winner at the zone contest, while Posts of the zone sponsor the zone champion at the State Finals in Jefferson City.

Contests are open to the public, with no admission charge. Schools and the public, generally, are invited to cooperate with the Legion in promoting this patriotic enterprise. Constructive criticisms and suggestions are considered by the Commission at its annual meeting.

CRITERIA FOR SPEECHES

Before the contest, each Judge should study the scoring of the Prepared Oration and Assigned Topic, as indicated by this scorecard:

Name of judge _____ **Date** _____

Number of Contestant		**1 2 3 4 5 6**
A. Content		
1. Was the speech original, fresh, and direct, applying the student's knowledge?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	12 pts. 4 pts.
2. Did the student skillfully select examples, descriptions, analogies, and specific data?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	12 pts. 4 pts.
3. Was the speech logical, well organized, and developed?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	12 pts. 4 pts.
4. Did the student show a comprehensiveness of knowledge of the subject matter?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	16 pts. 6 pts.
B. Speaking Skills		
1. Did the student use volume, rate, pitch, and diction effectively?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	6 pts. 4 pts.
2. Rate the speaker's style: language use, word arrangement and selection, and transitions.	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	6 pts. 4 pts.
3. Were body actions – poise, eye contact, posture, gestures, facial expressions – appropriate?	Prepared Oration Assigned Topic	6 pts. 4 pts.
	Total Points	_____

Penalties:
1 point for each minute (or fraction thereof) over or under allotted time
1-10 points for failure to speak on the Constitution

Rank each Contestant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.