

PRESS RELEASE

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Nation's Largest High School Essay Contest Honors Top Winners with Washington, D.C. Gala and \$200,000 in Prizes

WASHINGTON, D.C.—High school students and teachers from across the country are being honored tonight at a Washington, D.C. gala for winning top prizes in the *Being An American* Essay Contest – the nation's largest high school essay contest – the Bill of Rights Institute announced today.

During the gala, first, second and third place students and their teachers from across nine regions will be announced and awarded \$5,000, \$2,500 and \$1,250 respectively, for a total of nearly \$200,000 in cash prizes. The twenty-seven winning students and their teachers are in Washington, D.C. because their essays were chosen as top prize winners from over 50,000 participants.

The gala features Cal Thomas, Syndicated Columnist and FOX News Political Commentator; David H. Koch, New York businessman, philanthropist and national sponsor of the contest; Major General Jack Nicholson, U.S. Army (Ret.), a Vietnam War hero; and James C. Rees, President and Chief Executive Officer of George Washington's Mount Vernon. In addition to attending the gala, the students and teachers also participated in a Capitol Hill luncheon with federal legislators and took tours of the National Archives, Supreme Court and other Washington, D.C. landmarks.

The contest and Awards Program are both intended to stimulate and expand the national dialogue on what it means to be an American in today's society. To date, nearly 100,000 students have participated and more than \$500,000 has been awarded to teachers and students nationwide.

Launched in 2006, the annual essay contest is sponsored by the Bill of Rights Institute, a nonprofit educational organization.

The 2009-2010 contest's national sponsor is David H. Koch. Additional sponsors include the Stuart Family Foundation, Chicago; Amway Global, Ada, Mich.; the Jack Miller Family Foundation, Chicago; Norma Zimdahl, Tucson, Ariz.; the History Channel, New York, N.Y. and the Cincinnati Foundation, Washington, D.C.

Student and Teacher placements and information are included below. Copies of winning essays and photographs of students are available by request. More information on the Being An American Essay Contest can be found at <http://www.BeingAnAmerican.org>.

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David Koch with contest winners.

REGIONAL WINNERS INFORMATION FOR THE 2009-2010 CONTEST:

New England Region:

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

- 1st Place:** **Rebecca Frost**, Essex High School, *Essex Junction, Vt.*
Teacher: Timothy Root
- 2nd Place:** **Christopher Morse**, Kimball Union Academy, *Meriden, N.H.*
Teacher: Marilyn Lord
- 3rd Place:** **Hayley Hutchins**, Home School, *Hope, R.I.*
Teacher: Ellen Hutchins

Mid-Atlantic Region:

New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

- 1st Place:** **David Rinder**, Marlboro High School, *Morganville, N.J.*
Teacher: Shanna Howell
- 2nd Place:** **Michael Hibshman**, Manheim Township High School, *Lancaster, Pa.*
Teacher: Matt Johns
- 3rd Place:** **Lindsay Rindskopf**, Clarkstown High School South, *West Nyack, N.Y.*
Teacher: Marilyn Berta

South Atlantic Region:

Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington, D.C., West Virginia

- 1st Place:** **Geidys Mederos**, John A. Ferguson High School, *Miami, Fla.*
Teacher: Carlos Ardaya
- 2nd Place:** **Elayna Pierce**, Home School, *Cary, N.C.*

Teacher: Barry Pierce
3rd Place: **Stryker Watts**, Home School, *Sarasota, Fla.*
Teacher: Tricia Watts

Mid-South Region:

Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee

1st Place: **McKenzie Van Meter**, Independence High School, *Thompsons Station, Tenn.*
Teacher: Jackie Zigelsky
2nd Place: **Cody Franklin**, Home School, *Emmalena, Ky.*
Teacher: Catherine Franklin
3rd Place: **Jared Vanover**, Whitley County High School, *Williamsburg, Ky.*
Teacher: Johnny White

South Central Region:

Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas

1st Place: **Haley Shopp**, Grace Preparatory Academy, *Arlington, Tex.*
Teacher: Nancie Hall
2nd Place: **Rebecca Areaux**, Mount Carmel Academy, *New Orleans, La.*
Teacher: Victoria McCardell
3rd Place: **Krishna Manohar**, Jenks High School, *Jenks, Okla.*
Teacher: Eric Fox

Great Plains Region:

Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota

1st Place: **Timothy Cahill, Jr.**, Home School, *Lansing, Kans.*
Teacher: Timothy Cahill
2nd Place: **Scott Brackey**, Seaman High School, *Topeka, Kans.*
Teacher: Steve Darting
3rd Place: **Catherine Williams**, Beloit Junior-Senior High School, *Beloit, Kans.*
Teacher: Casey Seyfert

Great Lakes Region:

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin

1st Place: **Lindsey Bergholz**, Hinsdale Central High School, *Hinsdale, Ill.*
Teacher: Christian Korfist
2nd Place: **Hannah Deindorfer**, Saranac High School, *Saranac, Mich.*
Teacher: Cynthia Sanford
3rd Place: **David Sutter**, Archbishop Hoban High School, *Akron, Ohio*
Teacher: Jason Anderson

Mountain Region:

Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming

1st Place: **William Peterson**, Ridgeview Classical Schools, *Fort Collins, Colo.*
Teacher: Derek Anderson
2nd Place: **Taylor Williams**, Cheyenne Central High School, *Cheyenne, Wyo.*
Teacher: Jessica Fertig
3rd Place: **Dixie Sorensen**, Gunnison Valley High School, *Gunnison, Utah*
Teacher: Arti Olsen

Pacific Region:

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, U.S. Territories, American Armed Forces Schools Abroad

- 1st Place:** **Geoffrey Whitener**, Kealakehe High School, *Kailua Kona, Hawaii*
Teacher: David Huitt
- 2nd Place:** **Radost Ivanova**, La Quinta High School, *La Quinta, Calif.*
Teacher: Cheryl Schuler
- 3rd Place:** **Katrina Durnford**, Faith Bible Christian School, *Hillsboro, Ore.*
Teacher: Mike Bradley

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION: Bill of Rights Institute, Arlington, VA

The Bill of Rights Institute, founded in 1999, is a nonprofit educational organization. The mission of the Bill of Rights Institute is to educate young people about the words and ideas of America's Founders, the liberties guaranteed in our Founding documents, and how our Founding principles continue to affect and shape a free society.

CONTEST GOAL: To explore the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the civic values that unite us as Americans.

ESSAY QUESTION: What civic value do you believe is most essential to being an American? Trace the enduring importance of this value throughout the American story by discussing: a Founding document that reflects this value; a figure from American history who embodies this value; and examples of how you have and/or could put this value into practice.”

STUDENTS ELIGIBLE: Students in grades 9-12 who are U.S. citizens or legal residents and are either attending public, private, religious, or charter schools, being home-schooled, or participating in a GED or correspondence school program but are no older than 19 years of age.

JUDGES: High school teachers

CASH PRIZES: Ten equal cash awards for students and teachers in each region:

- **First Prize:** \$5,000 each
- **Second Prize:** \$2,500 each
- **Third Prize:** \$1,250 each
- **Seven Honorable Mentions:** \$250 each

WEB SITE AND CONTEST GUIDELINES: <http://www.BeingAnAmerican.org>