

2023 Constitution Essay Contest Entry Form
September 17, 2022 marks the 236th Anniversary of the signing of our U. S. Constitution. To mark this historic occasion, we invite you to enter **Solano County's Eleventh Annual Constitution Essay Contest**



- * **GRAND PRIZE AWARD:** \$700. *Mini-Grant*
- * **BEST of SCHOOL AWARDS:** \$100. *Mini-Grants* presented to **ONE STUDENT** from **EVERY SCHOOL** submitting **30+ student essays**
- * **FOUNDERS' CHOICE AWARDS:** \$50. *Mini-Grants* as merited

Contest is open to ALL Solano County students in grades 10 - 12

Teachers and Schools of the Grand Prize and Best of School recipients will also receive awards.

- * Awards will tentatively be presented at the Awards Presentation Dinner, Date and Location to be determined
- * (Complimentary dinners for Award Recipients, their parents and teachers will be provided by the *Constitution Literacy Advocates*, sponsors of the annual essay contest. Visit *CLA* website for more information.)
www.celebratetheconstitution.webs.com

2023 Constitution Essay Contest Topic and Rules

Who is Eligible: **Solano County Students, grades 10 – 12** currently enrolled in public, private, or are Home Schooled within Solano County

ESSAY TOPIC: “If the U.S. Constitution protects our God given unalienable Rights, why is ‘eternal vigilance’ necessary to protect our Liberty?”

***** **BEFORE YOU BEGIN** *****

* **READ:** “**Writers’ Tips & Judges’ Criteria**” and “**Suggested Reading & Resources,**” pp 2-3

CONTEST RULES:

1. Essay must be **500 words or less** and include a “**Title**” reflecting Your Main Idea
2. Entry must be an original work (not plagiarized) or previously appeared in any medium. Entries will be judged primarily on strength of the content (however, poor grammar, punctuation, spelling will not help your chances.) Any quotations or copyrighted material used in the essay must be properly identified.
3. Completed essays are to be submitted in either **Word** or **PDF format** via e-mail to: constitution225@gmail.com and must include the following affidavit and information:
“I certify that I am a student at _____ in the _____ grade and that I am the sole author of this submission.” The affidavit must also include your full name, **Include your teacher’s name and email address.**
** **Please CC your teacher as proof that you have entered the contest.**
4. Entry Deadline: **All entries must be submitted by NOON, Friday, October 20, 2023**
5. Entries not meeting these submission guidelines will be automatically disqualified.
6. No entry fee is required.
7. Decisions are at the sole discretion of the judges.
8. Award recipients will be notified by email, or through your teacher.

Writers' Tips & Judges' Criteria (YOUR ESSAY SHOULD INCLUDE) -- Judges will look for the following:

1. What "God given unalienable Rights" are protected by the U.S. Constitution?
2. What does Liberty mean to you?
3. How does vigilance protect Liberty?
4. What happens when citizens neglect their responsibility to remain vigilant? Cite examples
5. How can we, as citizens, protect our Constitution and our Liberty? Cite examples.
6. **Essay Development:** Be sure to include a "Title." Pay attention to sentence structure, topic sentences, introduction, body, and conclusion. Check grammar and spelling. Proofread your work!

**** Suggested Reading ****

Food for Thought and Discussion
Think Before You Write

Declaration of Independence: "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, . . ."

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

Preamble of the U.S. Constitution: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, 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."

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>

Bill of Rights: The first Ten Amendments to the United States Constitution

"The **Bill of Rights**, the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution, spells out Americans' rights in relation to their government. It guarantees civil rights and liberties to the individual—like freedom of speech, press, and religion. It sets rules for due process of law and reserves all powers not delegated to the Federal Government to the people or the States. And it specifies that "the enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people."

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights/what-does-it-say>

Liberty: Definition: "freedom from arbitrary or despotic government or control: freedom from external or foreign rule; independence."

<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/liberty>

James Madison: "Although all men are born free, slavery has been the general lot of the human race. Ignorant--they have been cheated; asleep--they have been surprised; divided--the yoke has been forced upon them. But what is the lesson...? **The people ought to be enlightened, to be awakened, to be united, that after establishing a government they should watch over it.... It is universally admitted that a well-instructed people alone can be permanently free.**"

https://www.azquotes.com/author/9277-James_Madison

More Food for Thought

John Philpot Curran and many others: "Eternal vigilance is the Price of Liberty"

<https://www.monticello.org/research-education/blog/eternal-vigilance/>

Benjamin Franklin:

"If there is a lesson in all of this it is that our Constitution is neither a self-actuating nor a self-correcting document. **It requires the constant attention and devotion of all citizens.** There is a story, often told, that upon exiting the Constitutional Convention Benjamin Franklin was approached by a group of citizens asking what sort of government the delegates had created. His answer was: "**A republic, if you can keep it.**" The brevity of that response should not cause us to under-value its essential meaning: **democratic republics are not merely founded upon the consent of the people, they are also absolutely dependent upon the active and informed involvement of the people for their continued good health.**"

Dr. Richard Beeman University of Pennsylvania

<http://constitutioncenter.org/learn/educational-resources/historical-documents/perspectives-on-the-constitution-a-republic-if-you-can-keep-it>

President Ronald Reagan:

"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It **must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.**"

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/331003-freedom-is-never-more-than-one-generation-away-from-extinction>

Edmund Burke:

"We in America do not have government by the majority—we have government by the majority *who participate*. . . All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent." https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/edmund_burke_136431

Thomas Jefferson:

"In questions of power, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the constitution."

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/85042-in-questions-of-power-let-no-more-be-heard-of>

"The good sense of the people will always be found to be the best army. They may be led astray for a moment, but will soon correct themselves."

<https://firstamendmentwatch.org/history-speaks-letters-thomas-jefferson-edward-carrington>

"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion [freedom of choice], the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform in their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power."

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/26169-i-know-no-safe-depository-of-the-ultimate-powers-of>