

NEWS FROM THE THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

December 5, 2022

Philadelphia – The Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee of the Judicial Council of the Third Circuit announced today that it is hosting an essay contest for **5th and 6th grade classes** focused on civics, citizenship, and the concept of the “Right to Vote”. The essay prompt is: “Why the right to vote is important to me and to our country.”

The Third Judicial Circuit is comprised of the U.S. Court of Appeals as well as the Federal District Courts of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The latter are trial courts, which include bankruptcy courts. Chief Circuit Judge Michael A. Chagares noted that “It is incumbent on us, as federal judges, to engage with our youth and to offer a robust civics education program.” The Committee and its members are partnering with bar associations, civic organizations, and educational institutions across the geographical reach of the Third Circuit to promote and oversee the essay contest.

This is a Class essay. One essay should be submitted on behalf of the Class. Class essays must be submitted on or before Friday, March 31, 2023. Classes submitting the best essays in each district (District of Delaware, District of New Jersey, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Middle District of Pennsylvania, Western District of Pennsylvania, and the District of the Virgin Islands) of the Third Circuit will be invited to one of the nine courthouses in the Third Circuit to present their essays during the first

weeks of May, in celebration of Law Day. The essays and presentations will be evaluated based on focus, content development, organization, and style. Prizes will be awarded.

Judge D. Brooks Smith, who chairs the Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee overseeing the contest, stated “Over 102 million Americans voted in the 2022 elections. In the years ahead, young Americans who are now elementary and secondary school students will add to those numbers by exercising ‘the franchise’ that is vital to responsible citizenship. Our committee believes that now is the time to ask these voters of the future to think about what their votes will one day mean to their communities and to their country.”

For more information about the essay contest, please visit the Third Circuit Court of Appeals website at <https://www.ca3.uscourts.gov/> or contact 267-299-4306.

Announcing Class Essay Contest

“Why the Right to Vote is important to me and to our country.”

Brought to you by the Third Circuit Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee



This essay contest is open to all 5th and 6th grade Classes in Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and U.S. Virgin Islands schools. This is a Class essay. One essay should be submitted on behalf of the Class. Class essays must be submitted on or before Friday, March 31, 2023.

Questions for class discussion to develop the class essay can include:

- *• Why are free and fair elections critical to our democracy?*
- *• How does the right to vote affect our daily lives?*
- *• What would happen if we did not have the right to vote?*
- *• What happens in countries that do not have the right to vote?*

- *• Are there court cases that uphold the right to vote?*
- *• What can we do to encourage voting?*
- *• How can your vote be good for others?*

Teachers should feel free to contact the committee if they would like a lawyer or a judge to assist the class in the discussion or development of this topic.

Essay contest rules, contact information, and suggested resources follow.

2023 Essay Contest Rules

ENTRY DEADLINE: Essay Contest opens December 5, 2022.

Entries must be submitted by 11:59 pm, March 31, 2023. Finalists will be selected in April.

PRIZES: Winners of the top three Class essays will be invited to participate in Law Week programs with federal judges and practitioners in area courthouses, covid conditions permitting.

HOW TO ENTER: Entry information can be accessed at <https://www.ca3.uscourts.gov>

Essays, in PDF format, must be submitted electronically to the mailbox for the courthouse closest to your school:

edpa_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov (Philadelphia and surrounding counties from Lancaster to Northampton Counties)

mdpa_harrisburg_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov mdpa_scranton_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov

mdpa_wilkes_barre_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov mdpa_williamsport_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov

wdpa_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov (Pittsburgh and western counties)

dnj_camden_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov dnj_trenton_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov

dnj_newark_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov

dde_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov (Delaware)

dvi_st_thomas_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov

dvi_st_croix_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov

LENGTH AND FORMAT: This is a Class essay. One essay should be submitted on behalf of the Class. The Class Essay should be submitted by the class teacher on behalf of a class as PDFs and include the teacher's email and telephone. Essays should be typewritten and no longer than 500 words.

JUDGING: Essays will be judged on four criteria:

Focus, Content Development, Organization, and Style

Each criterion will be worth 25 points.

CONTACT US: Courts_Community_Rule_of_Law@ca3.uscourts.gov

or 267-299-4306

Suggested Resources

Defining Voting Law

1. Annenberg Public Policy Center: <https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/topics/voting/>
2. National Constitution Center: <https://constitutioncenter.org/education/videos/voting-rights-amendments-introductory-level>
3. Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/elections/right-to-vote/>
4. National Geographic: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/why-voting-important>
5. United States Courts: From Suffragist Sashes to Black Armbands: <https://www.uscourts.gov/news/2020/04/14/suffragist-sashes-black-armbands-law-day-distance-learning-focuses-role-courts>
6. USA.gov: <https://www.usa.gov/voting-laws>

Relevant U.S. Cases

1. *Smith v. Allwright*, 321 U.S. 649 (1944); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/321/649/>
2. *South Carolina v. Katzenbach*, 383 U.S. 301 (1966); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/383/301/>
3. *Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections*, 383 U.S. 663 (1966); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/383/663/>
4. *Katzenbach v. Morgan*, 384 U.S. 641 (1966); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/384/641/>

Constitutional Amendments on Voting Rights

- 15th Amendment: <https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-15/>
- 19th Amendment: <https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-19/>
- 24th Amendment: <https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-24/>
- 26th Amendment: <https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-26/>