

# 2021 HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Jacksonville, Florida, November 19, 2021**

**For Immediate Release**

The lawyers and judges of the United States District Court, Middle District of Florida, and the members of the Jacksonville Chapter of the Federal Bar Association are pleased to announce and congratulate the following winners of the **2021 HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY CONTEST COMMEMORATING THE 230<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE RATIFICATION OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION.**

**First Place, Avi Patel, Stanton College Preparatory School**

**Prize: \$2,000**

**Second Place, Elizabeth DeVooght, Stanton College Preparatory School**

**Prize: \$1,000**

**Classroom Grant to Avi Patel's and Elizabeth DeVooght's Teacher,  
Maura Donoher: \$500**

**Third Place, Nissa Phillip, Paxon School for Advanced Studies**

**Prize: \$500**

**Classroom Grant to Nissa Phillip's Teacher,  
Dr. Mary Webster: \$500**

In addition to awarding prizes to the individual winners and their teachers, the Court presented Paxon School for Advanced Students with a School Grant of \$1,000 as the school whose students submitted the most essays (33).

Despite the continuing pandemic, the contest attracted entries from 7 of the 12 counties in the Jacksonville Division (Clay, Columbia, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Suwanee, and St. Johns) and from 21 high schools.

The 2021 High School Essay Contest prompted students to identify an amendment in the Bill of Rights that is most relevant to students attending public schools and explain how decisions of the United States Supreme Court have shaped that amendment's meaning. The 79 essays submitted were thoughtful and demonstrated an understanding of the freedoms students enjoy under the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution.

The student winners were recognized at a formal ceremony at the Bryan Simpson United States Courthouse in Jacksonville on November 19, 2021, conducted in compliance with CDC guidelines for public functions. United States District Judge Marcia Morales Howard and United States District Judge Brian J. Davis presided over the ceremony, recognizing the excellent work of the winners.

"The High School Essay Contest has been an important part of the Court's community outreach over the last four years," says Judge Howard. "Our democracy depends on knowledgeable and informed citizens. The Court's community outreach effort is committed to educating students and adults alike about the federal judiciary and the 'rule of law,' both of which play an important role in safeguarding the ideals articulated in the United States Constitution."

As attested by the judges and lawyers who read this year's thought-provoking and well-informed contest entries, our democracy will be in steady hands as these young authors develop into civic leaders.

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