

NFWL-NRA 2010 Bill of Rights National Essay Contest

ESSAY TOPIC: Freedom and Civic Virtues

This year, the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) and the National Rifle Association (NRA) are sponsoring the 13th annual nationwide Bill of Rights Essay Contest. The focus this year will be on the Bill of Rights as shown through the civic virtues of the millennial generation. The deadline for submission is **Friday, July 30, 2010** after which an NFWL/NRA joint committee will judge each essay and the seven award recipients will be chosen.

If you are a female High School junior or senior, class of 2010 or 2011, you are eligible to participate. The seven contest winners will receive: (1) a \$3,000 unrestricted scholarship to use towards college tuition at any U.S. college or university; and (2) an all-expense-paid trip to NFWL's 2010 Annual Conference, taking place November 18-22 at a location yet to be determined. Here you will meet women lawmakers from across the United States, learn about public policy, and establish relationships that often grow into mentoring opportunities.

The mission of The National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) is to provide strategic resources to women leaders for leadership development and effective governance through conferences, seminars, education materials, and networking opportunities at both the state and federal levels. NFWL is a non-partisan 501c-3, educational foundation. Its membership consists of members of the National Order of Women Legislators (all current and former women elected officials) corporate leadership and association members.

The National Rifle Association, established in 1871, is a grassroots membership organization with more than four million members committed to defending our freedoms as they are enumerated in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The Second Amendment states, "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." The NRA is proud to sponsor this annual essay contest with NFWL in order to enable young women committed to defending the Bill of Rights to attend college and advance women in leadership.

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This year's essay topic is "Freedom and Civic Virtues." Each applicant must write a 400-600 word essay on how freedom, moral principles, the U.S Constitution and especially the U.S. Bill of Rights shape the foundation for the role of young adults in civic engagement and politics (please see essay topic document for complete details).

The Scholarship Committee will weigh five specific elements in submissions: (1) research, logic, and insight; (2) understanding of America's founding documents, especially the Bill of Rights; (3) A clear thesis statement presented in the introduction, (4) stories and examples; and (5) inspiration regarding the debates about virtue ethics and law as it relates to our everyday lives. Errors in spelling and grammar can have a disqualifying effect.

Requirements:

Complete applications should include:

1. Two (2) copies of your essay;
2. Essay Contest Verification Form;
3. Two (2) personal reference letters;
4. The name of applicant's sponsoring female state legislator*;

**All applicants must be sponsored by a woman state legislator for this contest. To find a woman legislator in your state, visit your state's legislative website. The sponsoring legislator does not have to be from the applicant's district, but she does have to be from the applicants's state. Any applicants experiencing trouble locating a woman legislator in their state should contact the NFWL office for assistance.*

IMPORTANT: In advance of the July 30th deadline applicants must send in a completed *Essay Contest Verification Form* to NFWL by fax or mail. This form should be sent in prior to the submission of your entire application so NFWL can communicate with the applicant and sponsoring legislator regarding any changes with the essay contest or Annual Conference arrangements before the deadline.

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Eligibility: To be eligible for this year's essay contest, applicants must be college-bound female high school juniors or seniors – Class of 2010 or Class of 2011. All applicants are required to secure a state legislator as a sponsor. The seven contest winners and their sponsoring legislators also must be able to attend the *entire* NFWL Annual Conference where students will be presented with the award. The Conference will take place November 18-22, 2010 at a location yet to be determined. All travel and lodging expenses for the Annual Conference will be covered by the National Foundation for Women Legislators for the both winner and her sponsoring legislator.

Deadline for Essay Submission: Your essay must arrive or be postmarked to the NFWL office no later than Friday, July 30, 2010. Essays received after this date may not be considered for the contest.

Essay Submissions and Contact Information.

Send your completed essay application to:

**National Foundation for Women Legislators, Inc.
ATTN: NFWL / NRA Bill of Rights Essay Contest
910 16th Street, NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20006**

Questions may be directed to the NFWL office at 202-293-3040, ext. 1005

Fax: 202-293-5430 | E-mail: scholarships@womenlegislators.org

You may also visit our website, www.womenlegislators.org, to view scholarship FAQs.

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ESSAY TOPIC: Freedom and Civic Virtues

During America's founding years, Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Adams envisioned a free nation filled with responsible and virtuous citizens. When he stepped out of the Constitutional Convention and was asked what they had produced, Ben Franklin simply replied, "A Republic, if you can keep it."

Since the 1980s, millions of students in your generation have read books about moral excellence and participated in character education programs. Millennials born in the '80s and '90s are emerging into their adult years and into active citizenship.

And so we ask you: Were Ben Franklin and Samuel Adams right? Are there civic virtues that should be binding in the lives of all Americans? Are there values in which all people with good reason and a working conscience are obligated to act in accordance with? Are there natural rights that rest on these moral qualities?

GUIDELINES: This year’s essay topic is Freedom and Civic Virtues. In a 400 to 600 word essay explain how the Millennial Generation can exemplify freedom and civic virtue in their everyday lives. Step by step . . .

What do you think? Focus on freedoms, the U.S. Constitution and especially the U.S. Bill of Rights. Should laws and public policies be determined by reference to moral principles? Should law makers determine, create and bestow rights on the people OR are Americans born with a set of natural rights that can not be governed? Should virtues be the measure and basis of legal order and the goal of legislation and policy? How do these issues apply to our freedom and everyday lives? Use concrete examples in current events or historical events to prove your point.

To help with brainstorming, you may want to consider this comprehensive list of “basic goods” (rights) by contemporary moral philosophers:

Life and security; Pleasure, happiness, health, and the avoidance of pain; Knowledge, truth, and practical reasonableness; The experience and appreciation of aesthetic beauty and/or the natural world; Inner peace, self-integration, integrity, authenticity; Religion or faith; People and relationships- including a good marriage, family, friendship, and community; Work, excellence, and/or achievements and Fairness and justice.

Choose 2 or 3 of these “basic goods” to help you form your view. Which of these “basic goods,” in your opinion, are worthwhile? Is there evidence of these “basic goods” in the U.S. Constitution, especially the Bill of Rights? Moving forward, how can they be used as the foundation in the lives of the Millennial Generation? How do these virtues apply in everyday life?

IMPORTANT: In addition to the basics of spelling, punctuation, and writing style judges will critique your essay for its (1) research, logic, and insight (be sure to cite your sources); (2) understanding of America’s founding documents, especially the Bill of Rights; (3) A clear thesis statement in the introduction, (4) stories and examples; and (5) inspiration regarding the debates about virtue, ethics and law as it relates to our everyday lives.

FORMAT: 400 to 600 words, double spaced, 12 point font, Times New Roman or Arial.

OPTIONAL Research Help: Examples you may want to consider include:

- Research the American Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution, especially the U.S. Bill of Rights, and the thinking that went into them regarding both freedom and civic virtues. Consider Virginia’s Bill of Rights, written mostly by George Mason with help from Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, which pioneered freedom of the press and advanced freedom and natural rights in unprecedented ways. Also consider Pennsylvania’s Bill of Rights, which initiated free speech and strengthened religious liberty — two innovations that spread to the other new States.
- The debate between positivists (those that believe civic virtues can and should be governed) and natural-law advocates (those that believe in a set of innate natural rights that precede legal order). How are these points of view connected to the “basic goods” you have chosen to discuss?
- Has anarchy and absolute freedom, as advocated by Rousseau and Nietzsche, without civic virtue been proven disastrous? (ie. The French Revolution, Nazism, and dehumanizing “blood and soil” movements).
- America’ experiment in liberty in 1776 when the American Colonists declared themselves to be “endowed with inalienable rights” and offered their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to champion these inalienable rights.
- For virtue ethics and discussion of “basic goods”: Over the past four decades, a host of thinkers have picked up where Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and other great moral philosophers left off. These thinkers include Timothy (T.D.J.) Chappell, John Finnis, Philippa Foot, Alfonso Gomez-Lobo, Germain Grisez, Mark Murphy, Iris Murdoch, Rosalind Hursthouse, and Deidre McCloskey.



NFWL-NRA Bill of Rights Essay Contest Verification Form

In advance of the July 30th deadline applicants must send in a completed *Essay Contest Verification Form* to NFWL by fax, mail, or email. Fax: 202-293-5430 | E-mail: scholarships@womenlegislators.org

Applicant Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Birth Date: ____/____/____ High School Graduation Date: _____

High School: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

College(s) planning or desiring to attend in Fall 2010 or 2011: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Sponsoring Legislator Name: _____

Office Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Applicant Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date