

First Amendment Essay Contest

Sponsored by:



The First Amendment's guarantee of a free press is of crucial importance to all Americans. It is the foundation of American freedom and the essential distinction between our democracy and totalitarianism.

Journalists must dedicate themselves to defending our free press, and we call upon the scholastic journalists of Georgia to join the battle. Do so by entering our First Amendment Essay Contest!

Essays should focus on the importance of the First Amendment to all Americans, to freedom of speech and, particularly, freedom of the press for student publications.

Explain in your own words how you interpret the First Amendment and the role it plays in American life. What is its importance on your campus and in your school newspaper, magazine, yearbook or broadcast?

Section I: General Rules

1. The contest is open to all participating Georgia Scholastic Press Association member high school students in grades 9-12.
2. There is no cost to enter the contest.
3. Contestants may enter only one essay.

Section II: Contest Rules

1. Each contestant should read a copy of the rules and must complete the entry form. The rules contain information about the contest, judging and awards.
2. Each entry must include the contest entry form. The essay must have the name of the entrant, high school and publication listed at the top of each page.
3. Essays must be typewritten and must be single-spaced.
4. Essays must contain at least 300 words but no more than 500 words.
5. Any quotations or copyrighted material used in the essay must be identified properly. Failure to identify non-original material will be considered plagiarism.
6. Essays must be written in English.
7. The entry form and essay must be stapled together in the upper left-hand corner.
8. GSPA and The Cox Institute are not responsible for any entries lost or damaged in the mail.
9. Entries will not be returned. **Entries must be post-marked by Dec. 19, 2009.**

Section III: Judging

1. A panel of qualified judges, including University of Georgia and The Cox Institute faculty and staff will complete judging.
2. Judges will not discuss or compare essays being judged until all essays have been judged.
3. Decision of the judges is final.

Section IV: Scoring of Contest

1. Scoring procedures at all levels of the contest will be identical.
2. Essays will be scored based on:
 - material organization (logical interpretation of the subject, adherence to topic);
 - vocabulary and style (phrasing and continuity),
 - grammar, punctuation, spelling, neatness; and
 - adherence to contest rules (prepared in the proper format).

Section V: Awards

- 1st Place: \$100 for publication staff, \$100 and an engraved plaque for student
2nd Place: \$75 for publication staff, \$75 for student
3rd Place: \$50 for publication staff, \$50 for student

Winners will be recognized at the GSPA Awards Ceremony, April 30, 2010 at The University of Georgia in Macon.

For more information about the First Amendment Essay Contest and to view last year's winning essays, visit www.gspa.uga.edu or contact Joe Dennis at 706-542-5022 or jodennis@uga.edu.

Amendment I: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Student Information:

Full Name: _____

Home Address: _____

E-mail address: _____

Year (circle one): Senior Junior Sophomore Freshman

School _____ City _____ County _____

Medium (circle one): Newspaper/newsmagazine Literary Magazine Broadcast Yearbook

Publication Name: _____

Adviser's Certification:

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, this is the work of the student named and this student is a member of my publication staff

Adviser's signature: _____ Date: _____

Adviser's name (Please print): _____

Please attach this form to your entry and return to: First Amendment Essay Contest, GSPA, 120 Hooper Street, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-3018.

Sponsored by:



PLEASE NOTE – List your name, high school, and publication at the top of each page of your essay. All entries must be postmarked by Dec. 19, 2009.