

26-27  
**Scholarship**  
THEME

**VFW**

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.  
DEPARTMENT OF MICHIGAN

## "WHAT A VETERAN TAUGHT ME ABOUT AMERICA"

The VFW is dedicated to promoting patriotism and investing in our future generation. If you are a democracy-loving high school student interested in a \$35,000 college scholarship or a patriotic middle school student interested in winning \$5,000, these VFW scholarships may be for you!

### WHO CAN ENTER



Voice of Democracy  
open to high  
school students  
in grades 9-12.



Patriot's Pen  
open to middle  
school students  
in grades 6-8.

### HOW TO ENTER

Contact your local VFW Post for details and applications.  
Prizes and scholarships can be earned at the Post, District, State,  
and National levels.

**WIN \$35,000 COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OR  
WIN \$5,000 PATRIOT'S PEN!**

## VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY

AUXILIARY/POST # [insert Post Number]



For more information, contact:

[Contact name]

[Contact email address]

[Contact phone number]

### VFW & Auxiliary Announce Kick-Off of Annual Scholarships & Contests for K-Middle School Students

VFW Post & Auxiliary [insert Name/Post Number] are excited to announce the kick-off of the VFW Auxiliary's annual scholarships & contests for high school students who may compete for thousands of dollars in scholarships and prize earnings. We hope after reading about all these opportunities for your students that you will encourage your staff to take part in these programs that we have to offer. Not only could your students win something from National level but also, at the Post and possibly District level to. Please look over this and pass the information on to the proper staff in your building. If you have any questions, please give us a call. We hope to work with you and your staff on all these programs this year.

#### Grade School:

**Patriot's Pen** - Students in grades 6-8 may enter the VFW's **Patriot's Pen** youth essay contest for a chance to win their share of more than \$1.4 million in state and national awards. Each first-place state winner receives a minimum of \$500 at the national level and the national first place winner wins \$5,000. The essay contest encourages young minds to examine America's history, along with their own experiences in modern American society, by drafting a 300- to 400-word essay based on a patriotic theme. Entrants are due to [insert Name/Post Number] by **midnight, Oct. 31, 2026**. Before submitting your essay, read the rules and eligibility requirements on [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org).

**Illustrating America** - Students in grades K-8 can participate in this patriotic art contest that encourages students' artistic abilities as they express how they see America through drawings and paintings. The contest consists of three grade divisions: K-2, 3-5 and 6-8. Winners in each division receive VISA gift cards ranging in value from \$25-\$100. Entrants are due to [insert Name/Post Number] by **March 31, 2026**. Find more information at [www.vfwauxiliary.org/what-we-do/youth-activities](http://www.vfwauxiliary.org/what-we-do/youth-activities).

**About the VFW:** The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is the nation's largest and oldest major war veterans' organization. Founded in 1899, the congressionally chartered VFW is comprised entirely of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve force. With more than 1.5 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in nearly 6,000 Posts worldwide, the nonprofit veterans service organization is proud to proclaim "NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS" than the VFW, which is dedicated to veterans' service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. Learn more at [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org).

**About the VFW Auxiliary:** The VFW Auxiliary is one of the nation's oldest veterans' service organizations. Our members are relatives of those who served in a location of foreign conflict. We have nearly 470,000 members representing all 50 states, Panama, Guam, France, Thailand and the Philippines who volunteer millions of hours and give millions of dollars to support veterans, military service personnel, their families and communities. Learn more at [www.vfwauxiliary.org](http://www.vfwauxiliary.org).

## 2026-2027 Theme "What a Veteran Taught Me About America"

**Student Entry Deadline: Oct. 31, 2026**  
**Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$35,000 Award**

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### What is the Voice of Democracy Program?

Since 1947, the Voice of Democracy has been the Veterans of Foreign Wars' (VFW's) premier scholarship program. Each year, nearly 26,000 high school students compete for more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives. Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level. National winners will be notified of their scholarship & placement. Students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. This year's theme is,

### "What a Veteran Taught Me About America"

#### The Rules

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12 by the Oct. 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions: or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Foreign exchange students, students age 20 or over, GED or Adult Education Students are ineligible.

You must be the sole author of your essay. Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed. The recording must be in your own voice and in English. Hearing/speech impaired students should email the Voice of Democracy National Office at [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org) for special instructions. No music, singing, poetry or sound effects are allowed. To ensure fairness and impartiality in judging, essays **must be anonymous. Please do not include your name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of your essay.** Additionally, avoid references to your race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal your identity. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. However, personal identifiers tied to your individual background or experience should be avoided.

You may enter only one competition at one Post (if otherwise eligible) per year. At any time during the contest, additional participant personal information could be requested by the VFW, including but not limited to a photograph, SSN, or biographical information.

#### Advancement

Decisions of Judges at all levels are final. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. Contact the post where you entered at to check on your advancement

### What Is the Deadline for My Entry?

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, Oct. 31, 2026. It is the responsibility of the student to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location - ensuring it is a participating Post.

### How do I enter?

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or - 5 second max.) audio in MP3 format (no videos) on a flash drive, or other electronic device. You will submit the recording, a typed essay and this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or VFW Post for judging.

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, Submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to a Post. Your local post will give instructions on how to turn in your entry to them. Audio may be submitted physically on a Flash Drive, emailed to the Post (with permission) or submitted through our online platform using Scholars App. **To submit through Scholars App you must first receive a QR code or link from your local post.** Entries sent to VFW National Headquarters directly will not be considered.

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions: Visit this website [vfw.org/FindaPost](https://www.vfw.org/FindaPost) to "Find A VFW Post." If you do not have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit this link <https://www.vfw.org/ContactUs/> and look for "Find a State Contact" to get your VFW state office's phone number and email. If you still need assistance, please email us at VFW National Headquarters at [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org).

### What Are the Judging Criteria?

#### Originality is worth 35 points:

Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

#### Delivery is worth 35 points:

Speak in a clear and credible manner.

#### Content is worth 30 points:

Clearly express your ideas in an organized manner. Fully develop your theme and use transitions to move smoothly from one idea to another.

# 2026-2027 Official Entry Form Voice of Democracy Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

( )

Phone Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) Grade in School Age Jacket Size

School Name, City, State

Teacher's Name and Email (if applicable)

## To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian

(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

( )

Parent/Guardian Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian Email

## Participant Agreement for Students Advancing to National Level

If selected as a first-place state winner, I have the consent of my parent/guardian and school to attend the Founding Forward Spirit of America Leadership trip to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania as a guest of the VFW National Organization. In consideration for permission to participate in the National Voice of Democracy Competition ("Competition") I do hereby, for myself, for my heirs, executors, administrators and assignees, waive, release and discharge all rights and claims which I have or which may hereafter accrue against the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and/or the Departments (state organizations) of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and their respective officers, agents, successors and assigns from any damages which may be sustained by me in connection with my participation in or association with the Competition and/or arising out of any travel related to the Competition. In the event of sickness, accident or injury in connection with the Competition, I consent to and accept the services of a duly licensed medical, surgical or dental specialist selected on my behalf and for such treatments, as they may deem necessary. I understand that VFW will not be liable for such treatment. I further understand that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States retains non-exclusive rights to use my audio file, essay, name and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

## I Have Read and Understand the Rules and Participant Agreement

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have not inappropriately used any AI tools or Chat GPT. I have only entered the competition once yearly if otherwise eligible. I understand that if it is found that I have entered any other Post's competition or used this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

Signature of Student Participant

Date

## To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Voice of Democracy Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature

Post #

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (if applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of students participating

No. of winners advanced to District

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarship awards \$

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$

## To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Voice of Democracy Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Departments.

District Chairperson Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

( )

Phone Email

## To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature

( )

Daytime Phone Email

The winner has been will be (check one) notified that they are the first place Department winner on

For assistance contact:

816.968.2787

Email: [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org)

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_



2026-2027 Theme

“What A Veteran Taught Me About America”

**Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2026**

**Patriotic Written Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$5,000 Award**

## What is the Patriot's Pen Program?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 60,000 students who participated last year in this contest.

## Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, State and national level. Department (State) winners receive a portion of \$55,000 in national awards. National Winners will receive at least \$500. **The first-place national award is currently \$5,000.**

The Internal Revenue Service requires a recipient awarded more than \$599 be given Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable income. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

## How Does the Contest Work?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition. Decisions of Judges at all levels are final. Contact the post where you entered to check on your advancement. Decisions of Judges at all levels are final. Contact the post where you entered to check on your advancement.

## Who Can Enter?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th, 7th and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intend to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. (Foreign exchange students are ineligible.)

## How Do I Get Started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing contest.
- Contact a participating VFW Post and indicate your interest in participating.
- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its VFW Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of Oct. 31.

- Your local Post will give instructions on how to turn in your entry to them. It may be delivered in person, emailed to the Post (with permission) or submitted through our online platform using Scholars App. **To submit through Scholars App you must first receive a QR code or link from your local post.**

Entries sent to VFW National Headquarters directly will not be considered.

## How Am I Judged?

- **Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:**  
You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.
- **Theme development is worth 35 points:**  
Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.
- **Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:**  
Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

## What Is the Theme?

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme. The 2026-2027 theme is:

**“What A Veteran Taught Me About America”**

## Deadline Information.

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring VFW Post by midnight Oct 31.

## Note:

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions:

First, visit [vfw.org/FindaPost](http://vfw.org/FindaPost) to “Find a VFW Post.”

If you don't have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble contacting them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) headquarters office to see if they can offer any information or assistance.

You can visit [vfw.org/contactus](http://vfw.org/contactus) to look for “Find a State Contact” to get your VFW state office's phone number and email.

**For assistance contact  
the VFW National Headquarters at 816.968.2787  
Email: [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org)**

# 2026-2027 Official Entry Form Patriot's Pen Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) Grade in School Essay Word Count

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)

To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian  
(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's Email

## What Are the Rules?

- You must write your
- All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics. 300 - 400 words in length (+ or - 5 word max). Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.
- To ensure fairness and impartiality in judging, essays must be anonymous. Please do not include your name, address, school name, or any other personal identifiers in the body of your essay. Additionally, avoid references to your race, sex, religion, national origin, or other specific personal characteristics that could reveal your identity. General references to nationality or patriotic identity (such as being an American or referencing American values) are permitted if they are relevant to the essay theme. However, personal identifiers tied to your individual background or experience should be avoided.
- Do not put your name on the essay. The entry form is your essays cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post
- The essay must be contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. Inappropriate use of ChatGPT or other AI tools is not allowed. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to the use of your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.
- At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the

*I Have Read and Understand the Contest Rules*

Signature of Student Participant

Date

To Be Completed by the VFW Post  
I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Patriot's Pen Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature Post#

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (if applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of participants \_\_\_\_\_ No. of winners \_\_\_\_\_

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarships awards \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (Banquet, Pins, etc.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

To Be Completed by the VFW District  
I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Patriot's Pen Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Department.

District Chairperson Signature Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Email

To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson  
I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Patriot's Pen Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone Email

The winner  has been  will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on \_\_\_\_\_.

Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_



# VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY

## AUXILIARY/POST # [insert Post Number]

For more information, contact:

[Contact name]

[Contact email address]

[Contact phone number]



### **VFW & Auxiliary Announce Kick-Off of Annual Scholarships & Contests for High School Students**

VFW Post & Auxiliary [insert Name/Post Number] are excited to announce the kick-off of the VFW Auxiliary's annual scholarships & contests for high school students who may compete for thousands of dollars in scholarships and prize earnings. We hope after reading about all these opportunities for your students that you will encourage your staff to take part in these programs that we have to offer. Not only could your students win something from National level but also, at the Post and possibly District level to. Please look over this and pass the information on to the proper staff in your building. If you have any questions, please give us a call. We hope to work with you and your staff on all these programs this year.

**Voice of Democracy** - This audio-essay program provides high school students with the unique opportunity to express themselves in a patriotic-themed recorded essay. Each year, nearly 25,000 9-12 grade students enter to win their share of more than \$2 million in educational scholarships and incentives awarded through the program. The national first place winner receives a \$35,000 scholarship paid directly to their American university, college or vocational/technical school. Other national scholarships range from \$1,000-\$16,000 and the first-place winner from each VFW Department (state) wins at least a scholarship of \$1,000. Applications must be turned in to [insert Name/Post Number] by midnight, Oct. 31, 2026. Before submitting your essay, read the rules and eligibility requirements on [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org).

**Young American Patriotic Art Contest** - Students submit an original two-dimensional piece of artwork. Entry must have completed during the current school year. Student entries must be submitted to VFW Auxiliary [insert Name/Post Number] by March 31, 2026. Students begin by competing at the local VFW Auxiliary level. The first-place winner from each Auxiliary advances to the Department (state) competition. Department first-place winners compete for their share of \$37,000 in national awards, and the national first-place winner is awarded a \$15,000 scholarship. To download an entry form, visit [www.vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships](http://www.vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships).

**3-Dimensional Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest** - Students submit an original three-dimensional piece of artwork. Entry must have completed during the current school year. Students begin by competing at the local VFW Auxiliary level. Student entries must be submitted to VFW Auxiliary [insert Name/Post Number] by March 31, 2026. The first-place winner from each Auxiliary advances to the Department (state) competition. Department first-place winners compete for their share of \$5,500 in national awards, and the national first-place winner is awarded a \$2,500 scholarship. To download an entry form, visit <https://vfwauxiliary.org/scholarships>.

**About the VFW Auxiliary:** The VFW Auxiliary is one of the nation's oldest veterans' service organizations. Our members are relatives of those who served in a location of foreign conflict. We have nearly 470,000 members representing all 50 states, Panama, Guam, France, Thailand and the Philippines who volunteer millions of hours and give millions of dollars to support veterans, military service personnel, their families and communities. Learn more at [www.vfwauxiliary.org](http://www.vfwauxiliary.org).

We hope that you are seeing these opportunities for your students that you will encourage your staff to take part in these programs that we have to offer. Not only could your students win something from National level but also, at the Post and possibly District level to. Please look over these and pass the information on to the proper staff in your building please. If you have any questions, please give us a call.

*Bring Out the*

# RED CARPET

FOR THE FOLLOWING

**2026-2027**

**SCHOLARSHIPS!**



VFW AUXILIARY  
SUPPORTING VETERANS' HEROES

## **VFW Voice of Democracy Contest**

Theme: *"What A Veteran Taught Me about America?"*

Due: Oct 31st, 2026

## **VFW Patriot's Pen Essay Contest**

Theme: *"What A Veteran Taught Me about America?"*

Due: Oct 31st, 2026

## **Continuing Education Scholarship**

Due: February 15, 2027

## **Young American Creative Patriotic Art Contest**

Due: March 31, 2027

## **3-Dimensional Patriotic Art Contest**

Due: March 31, 2027

**Open to Students Grades 6-12**



**SCAN TO APPLY!**

For More Info: [www.vfwauxiliary.org](http://www.vfwauxiliary.org)



# VFW AUXILIARY PATRIOTIC ART CONTESTS!



## ★ Patriotic Art Contest ★




1ST PLACE: **\$1,000**

2ND PLACE: **\$800**

3RD PLACE: **\$600**

4TH PLACE: **\$400**

5TH PLACE: **\$200**




## ★ 3D Patriotic Art Contest ★

1ST PLACE: **\$500**

2ND PLACE: **\$250**

3RD PLACE: **\$100**

*Due:*  
**MARCH 31, 2027**



### ★ DEADLINES & WHERE TO SEND WINNING ENTRIES: ★



**STUDENTS:  
MARCH 31:**

Student entries due to participating/sponsoring VFW Auxiliary for judging.



**POSTS / AUXILIARIES:  
APRIL 15:**

First place winner from each participating/sponsoring VFW Auxiliary due to the VFW Auxiliary Department judging.

### WHERE TO SEND ENTRIES:



SCAN TO APPLY!



Nicole Koutz  
410 N. Clinton  
St. Louis, MI 48880



turtlelee@hotmail.com



989-620-6425