

Victims of Communism- Florida

STUDENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026

ADDENDUM: OTHER SCHOLARSHIPS



Website: <https://vocflorida.org/>

Victims of Communism – Florida (VOCF) (NOTE: previously Victims of Communism – Manatee [VOCM]) provides general information on four other related scholarship programs:

1. VFW “Voice of Democracy”
2. American Legion
3. National History Day/Manatee History Day
4. Dissident Project

ADDITIONAL SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION:

Participants in the VOCF Scholarship Competition may wish to compete in similar scholarship programs in addition, some before, and some after, this one in the school year. For each of the following, it is possible to appropriately adapt and reuse your research for these competitions so that you get more “bang” for your research time and effort “buck.”

Disclaimer: The information below is for guidance only; it is each student’s responsibility to confirm the rules, deadlines, etc., and meet the necessary qualifications of the respective competitions.

For both the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars Scholarship Programs, their only category is Oratory.

Each has different requirements. The Legion’s U.S. Constitution-focused program does not change from year to year, while the topic for the VFW’s high school-level “Voice of Democracy” program in 2025-26 is **“How Are You Showing Patriotism and Support for our Country?”**

VOCF has consulted with the National Headquarters for both the American Legion and VFW. Both have confirmed that a comparison of the U.S. Constitution and the U.S. governance model featuring individual freedoms and the rule of law against the governance models of Communist Russia (and then Soviet Union), China, Romania, Cuba, Cambodia, North Korea, Vietnam, Nicaragua, or Venezuela under their leaders listed above generally would be an

acceptable entry in their respective oratorical competitions, if appropriately adapted to meet their requirements.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS (VFW)

Voice of Democracy

Rules and Eligibility

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 ... these scholarships may be for you.

Established in 1947, our **Voice of Democracy** audio-essay program provides high school students with the unique opportunity to express themselves regarding a democratic and patriotic-themed recorded essay. Each year, nearly 25,000 ninth through 12th grade students from across the country enter to win their share of more than \$1 million in educational scholarships and incentives awarded through the program.

The national first place winner receives a \$35,000 scholarship paid directly to the recipient's American university, college or vocational/technical school. A complete list of other national scholarships ranges from \$1,000-\$21,000, and the first-place winner from each VFW Department (state) wins at least a scholarship of \$1,000. Before submitting your essay, download the application at:

<https://vfw.org/uploads/Documents/Wood%2025-26/VoiceofDemocracyEntryFormFillable25-26.pdf>

and find your sponsoring local VFW Post as applications and entries must be turned in by **midnight, Oct. 31**.

Another email address is:

<https://www.vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships>

Again, please follow the VFW's on-line enrollment instructions and note the quick submission deadline of October 31. You can submit your physical copies of your oratorical recording and supplemental documentation to VFW Post 10141 at 5105 Manatee Ave W, Bradenton, FL 34209. Or, you can submit your entry via email to: vfwpost10141@gmail.com.

AMERICAN LEGION

About the Oratorical Contest

“A constitutional speech contest”

The American Legion Oratorical Contest exists to develop deeper knowledge and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution among high school students. Since 1938, the program has presented participants with an academic speaking challenge that teaches important leadership qualities, the history of our nation's laws, the ability to think and speak clearly, and an understanding of the duties,

responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship.

Young orators earn some of the most generous college scholarships available to high school students. Over \$203,500 in scholarships can be awarded each year. The overall national contest winner gets a \$25,000 scholarship. Second place takes home \$22,500, and third gets \$20,000. Each department (state) winner who is certified into and participates in the national contest's first round receives a \$2,000 scholarship. Those who advance past the first round receive an additional \$2,000 scholarship. The American Legion's National Organization awards the scholarships, which can be used at any college or university in the United States.

Eligible participants must be citizens of or lawful permanent residents of the United States. High school (public, parochial, military, private or home school) students under age 20 are eligible. Competition begins at the local post level and advances to a state competition. Legion department (state-level) representatives certify one winner per state to the national contest, where department winners compete against each other in two speaking rounds. The contest caps off with a final round that decides the three top finishers.

The oration must be on some aspect of the Constitution, with emphasis on a citizen's duties and obligations to our government. The same subject and oration used in the

department contest must be used in the national contest. Speeches are eight to 10 minutes long; three-to five-minute extemporaneous speeches on an assigned topic also are part of the contest.

For more information:

<https://www.legion.org/oratorical/rules>

Please follow the on-line application instructions by the given deadline and be prepared to compete in the Oratorical Program by applying as appropriate at: American Legion Kirby Stewart Post 24, 2000 75th St., W, Bradenton, FL 34209; or at American Legion Post 325, 3412 U.S.-301, Ellenton, FL 34222.

National History Day / Manatee History Day

For National History Day/Manatee History Day, the theme for 2026 is “**Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History.**” The VOCF Project could fit well into this school year’s (2025-26) program. NHD/MHD has categories for essays, individual and group performances, exhibits, websites, and more.

For more information about MHD and answers to frequently asked questions about rules and procedures, see the NHD website at <https://nhd.org/en/contest/theme/>.

DISSIDENT PROJECT: National Essay Contest

<https://www.unigo.com/scholarships/high-school-students/scholarships-for-high-school-seniors/dissident-project-national-essay-contest>

Description: Since 2023, the Dissident Project has offered an annual essay contest. **The application deadline for this year is October 31, 2025.**

“Have you ever stood tall in the face of injustice? When did you realize the value of your American freedoms? What caused this realization? What does it mean to be free? On our trips to schools around the country, we’ve heard from hundreds of incredible young people. You’re a dissident, too — and it’s time to tell the world your story. In our first national essay contest, the Dissident Project wants to award the bravery and resilience of three high schoolers whose essays touch our hearts. The final five contenders will be judged by a panel of esteemed guests who do important work in the journalism and human rights space. Keep reading to pick your prompt, meet our guest judges, read the rules, and check out the prizes.

Application requirements for the Dissident Project National Essay Contest are:

- Essay
- Application form

Additional Information: The inaugural Dissident Project Essay Contest will encourage conversations about liberty, bravery, and freedom beyond the classroom. Each of our six prompts is designed to inspire personal reflections on how American values have impacted students' lives.

Submissions should be in the form of a 500-800-word essay-style response to one of the six prompts provided. The top five selections will be evaluated by a panel of esteemed guest judges. The winner will receive \$3,000 in scholarship funds, along with professional-level editing from Dissident Project's parent organization, Young Voices—a talent agency for liberty-minded young people. The winning essay will be published in a national outlet. Second and third prize winners will be awarded \$2,000 and \$1,000, respectively, and their pieces will be published in the Dissident Project Blog. All three top finishers will gain immediate admittance to Dissident Project's Student Advisory Board.

Award Amount: Chosen applicants will receive up to a \$3,000 award. The total amount awarded for this scholarship is \$6,000.”

Application Deadline Information:

The deadline to apply for this scholarship is Friday, October 31, 2025.

Note that this UNIGO website also features a lot of information about other available scholarships.

Fig #1 Program Comparisons

Category		VOCF	VFW	AL	MHD	DP
1	Paper / Essay	X			X	X
2	Exhibit	X			X	
3	Oratory	X	X	X		
4	Performance				X	
5	Documentay				X	
6	Website				X	

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