



**2026 RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE
88TH ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL CONTEST SPONSORED BY
THE AMERICAN LEGION DEPARTMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS**

Scott M. Conner
Department Commander

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Department Adjutant

Lisa A. McPhee
Department Oratorical Chairman.

This competition is approved by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Department of Education Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Inquiries may be directed to

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THE DEPARTMENT PRIZES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1st - \$1250
2nd - \$800
3rd - \$500
4th-6th - \$300

* The first-place winner receives the state prize of \$1,250 and then receives a \$2,000 scholarship upon participation in the first round of the National Contest. The state oratorical champion will automatically advance into the National American Legion Oratorical Competition. See the National Contest brochure for further details.

The National Finals Contest will be held May 15-17, 2026, Hillsdale, Michigan at Hillsdale College

ORGANIZATION

The contest will be under the direct supervision of the American Legion Oratorical Committee, appointed by the Department Commander. Final authority on all issues raised shall remain with the Committee. The State has been divided into three Zones as

Zone 1 – Districts 1 & 3 (Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden Counties)
Zone 2 – Districts 4, 5, & 6 (Worcester, Middlesex, and Norfolk Counties)
Zone 3 – Districts, 7, 8, & 9 (Suffolk, Essex, and Bristol)
Zone 4 – District 10 (Plymouth, Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket Counties)

Elimination contests will be held by Zones. The two top Zone winners will compete in the State Finals
TBD

Each Department (state) of the American Legion is responsible for all arrangements for Department Contests. Each Department can enter only one contestant into the National First Round Contest.

SCHEDULE OF 2026 CONTESTS CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS IS January 31, 2026

Contestants are to be selected by the school principals in any manner they deem suitable to represent the school. The name(s) shall be certified by the principal to the Oratorical Committee, postmarked no later than January 31, 2026, on a form that will be supplied to the school. Any American Legion Post may sponsor as many contestants from a school as they wish.

ZONE CONTESTS

Decided by each of the Zones

The first contest that a contestant enters, sponsored by the American Legion, is the Zone Contest. School authorities and contestants will be notified through the mail as well as the Department web site as to where these contests will be held. All contestants should be prepared to enter this contest by March 15, 2026.

DEPARTMENT CONTEST

TBD-March 2026

The two winners from the Zone Contests will compete for the Department Oratorical Championship

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible participants in the contest shall be citizens of or lawful permanent residents of the United States. All contestants must be bona fide students herein described as any student under the age of 20 years on the date of the national contest who is presently enrolled in a high school or junior high school (public, parochial, military, private or home school), commencing with grade nine and terminating with grade 12.

Students must be enrolled in high school or junior high school during the time of participation at any level of the contest. High school students that graduate early during the school year are eligible to compete if they are not enrolled in a college, university, trade school or other institution of higher learning at the time of the department finals contest.

Contestants must either be legally domiciled within or attend an educational institution within the department (state) where they enter competition. Contestants can enter competition in only one department

PREPARED ORATION

All contestants shall be required to deliver a prepared oration, which must be the original effort of each contestant, and must require not less than eight (8) nor more than ten (10) minutes for delivery.

The prepared oration must be based on some phase or phases of the Constitution of the United States which will give *emphasis to the attendant duties and obligations of a citizen to our government*. Failure to do this may result in disqualification. The same subject is to be used for the prepared oration throughout all contests.

The contestant may choose their own subject, or they may select a title similar to topics which follow:

An American Citizen's Rights and Responsibilities under the Constitution

Our Constitution – Worth Having, Worth Defending

The Constitution in a Changing World

The Constitution in Our Everyday Life

The Bill of Rights – Reciprocal Rights and Duties

The Constitution – Guardian of People's Rights

Contestants may have in their possession a copy of their prepared oration in the first holding room. The copy may be in electronic or paper form. They may consult the copy of their prepared oration, until they exit the holding room in

Order to begin the contest, at which time the copy of the prepared oration will be surrendered to the contest official who is monitoring the first holding room.

THE ASSIGNED TOPIC DISCOURSE FEATURE

The assigned topic discourse must not consume less than three (3) minutes or more than five (5) minutes for delivery. The purpose of the assigned topic discourse is to test the speaker's knowledge of the subject, the extent of his or her research, and the ability to discuss the topic as related to the basic principles of government under the Constitution.

Each contestant speaks on the same assigned topic which shall be drawn by the contest official in full view of the audience immediately before the last speaker begins delivery of his/her prepared oration and will be made known to the audience and each contestant approximately five minutes prior to the time of delivery.

Assigned Topics for 2026 Oratorical Contest

Amendment IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Article III

Section 3. Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

Article IV

Section 4. The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.

Article VI

Clause 3. The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States

JUDGING

The State Contest shall be judged by five judges. The District and Zone Contests shall be judged by three or five judges. Under no condition shall a judge be used for more than one contest in the same year. The decision of the judges shall be final.

CONTEST REGULATIONS

Dress – Uniforms are not permitted. Appropriate business attire is required for all contestants. Contestants may not wear awards and medals from previous competitions.

Copies of the Prepared Oration – Contestants participating in the State Finals shall submit to the State Chairman a neatly printed copy of their prepared oration. Titles of orations must be shown.

Order of Appearance – Contestants shall draw for the order in which they appear, the drawing to be conducted

By the Chairman, who will introduce the speakers as Number 1, Number 2, etc.

Notes and Lecterns – The use of notes, amplification, lectern, or speaker’s stand by contestants, or prompting in Any manner, is not permitted.

Language – All contestants at each contest level are required to speak in the English language. It is acceptable to utilize or incorporate short phrases of a foreign language into the prepared oration and/or assigned topic in order to develop the argument, establish a point, etc. The vast majority of the prepared oration and/or assigned topic must be delivered in the English language.

Songs – The singing of a song in any language is not permitted and will result in the immediate disqualification of The contestant. The contestant may, however, quote a verse(s) of a song provided proper attribution is made.

Quotations – In both the prepared oration and the assigned topic discourse, quotations must be indicated as such. Where quotations are more than 10 words in length, the author’s name must be given in the manuscript and cited orally.

HINTS, TIPS, AND UPDATES

Contestants are encouraged to visit the American Legion Department of Massachusetts web site at <http://www.masslegion.org/> for hints, tips, and the latest updates, especially to the contest schedules. When you reach the Department web site, click on Programs Americanism Oratorical to reach the Oratorical page. The Chairman will post all updates on the Oratorical page as soon as they are available. Contestants are also encouraged to visit the American Legion National web site at <http://www.legion.org/oratorical> for further information including videos of the top three finalists in previous years’ National contests delivering their orations [URL for videos is <https://www.legion.org/oratorical/videos> .

THE ORATORICAL COMMITTEE

Chairman – Lisa A. McPhee Cell 978 230 6208 Lredsox1964@aol.com or deptadjutant@masslegion.org

Vice Chairman – Scott Connor Phone 508-885-5618 smconner@charter.net

2nd Vice Chairman – Bob Burke Cell 508-415-8501 burkerk@comcast.net

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2026 AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF MASSACHUSETTS, ORATORICAL CONTEST CERTIFICATION OF HIGH SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE

Student Name: _____

Sponsored by American Legion Post No: _____ District: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Parent's Name: _____

Dates Unavailable to compete in State Finals (It is a problem with many contestants.

Name and Location of High School Contestant Now Attends:

School: _____ Grade: _____

The principal of the high school must certify the contestant's age and the fact that they attend the school by signing this this form:

Principal: _____

The high school principal is authorized to select one or more school representative(s) in any manner deemed satisfactory. This application must be filled out completely and mailed, not later than January 31, 2026, to Lisa A. McPhee 157 Water St, Clinton, MA 01510. Applicants are also encouraged to send a copy of the completed and signed application as a readable PDF file to Lredsox1964@aol.com or deptadjutant@masslegion.org as backup, particularly if applying close to the deadline date.