

BILL OF RIGHTS MONTH



STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

ELIGIBILITY

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Federal Bar Association, the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, and Discovering Justice are partnering to host a Bill of Rights Month student essay contest, open to all high school students who reside in Massachusetts.

- Open to all high school students residing in Massachusetts
- Family members of FBA Board, U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit staff, U.S. District Court- District of Massachusetts staff or Discovering Justice staff are not eligible to participate.

A judging committee comprised of federal judges and FBA board members will decide on the top three essays submitted. First, second, and third-place winners will receive a cash prize, along with honorable mentions. Finalists will have their essays published on the Court's website, the First Circuit's Civics website, and in both the Massachusetts FBA and Discovering Justice newsletter.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Structured, creative, and tightly focused response that demonstrates a genuine grappling with the topic
- Convincing arguments supported by specific examples
- Carefully proofread for grammar and punctuation
- Please see the full list of requirements on the next page!

DEADLINE: JANUARY 31, 2025

CASH PRIZES AWARDED TO

1ST, 2ND, 3RD, and

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Answer the following question in 550 words or less:

In *New Jersey v. T.L.O.* (1985), the United State Supreme Court held that students have an expectation of privacy at school. However, to balance this right with the school's responsibility to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment, the Court ruled that school officials may search a student or their belongings so long as there is a "reasonable suspicion" that the student is violating either the law or school rules and policies. Given the evolving ways the Fourth Amendment is applied in schools today, what should the balance be between ensuring student safety and respecting students' Fourth Amendment rights?

RESOURCES

Start here:

- [Facts and Case Summary - New Jersey v. T.L.O.](#) (U.S. Courts)
- [The Bill of Rights: What Does it Say?](#) (National Archives)
- [The U.S. Constitution](#) (National Constitution Center)

HOW TO SUBMIT

- Visit the following site:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BillofRightsContest2024>
- Fill out the form and press "Submit"
(Incomplete entries will not be considered!)

QUESTIONS?

- Contact FBA **Annabel Rodriguez**
(arodriguez@verrill-law.com) or **Jennifer Denker**
(jdenker@meehanboyle.com)

2024-2025 Bill of Rights Contest Rules:

Who May Enter

The contest is open to all high school students who reside in Massachusetts, regardless of where they attend school. High school students are defined as those in grades 9-12.

Essay Length and Format

The maximum essay length is 550 words. All essays must be the original and exclusive authorship and creation of the entrant. Any references/citations would not be included in the word count. Essays must be submitted through the following site <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BillofRightsContest2024>

Entry Deadline

Entries will be accepted through 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 31, 2025. Winners will be notified in the Spring.

Judging

Essays will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Structured, creative, and tightly focused response that demonstrates a genuine grappling with the topic
- Convincing arguments supported by specific examples
- Carefully proofread for grammar and punctuation

Essays will be evaluated by individuals selected by the U.S. District Court, U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, Federal Bar Association – Massachusetts Chapter, and Discovering Justice (the “Sponsors”).

Prizes

First place, second place, third place and honorable mentions will be awarded cash prizes. Essays will be published on the U.S. Courts for the First Circuit Civics webpage and U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts’ website and in both the FBA Massachusetts Chapter and Discovering Justice newsletter. Winners will be asked to read their entries at a hybrid (in-person and virtual) event in the Spring (DATE/TIME TBA).

Release Forms & Zoom Event Participation

Your entry into this contest constitutes a release allowing the Sponsors to publish your essay on their respective websites and in print publications, and to identify you as its author. The Sponsors reserve the right to require any Finalist to submit a written release and or license to use the submission signed by the Finalist and/or a parent or guardian. Entrants acknowledge that should an event occur honoring finalists, it will be recorded, and pictures/screenshots will be taken and may be published by the Sponsors.

Disqualification

Reasons for disqualification include incomplete entries, off-topic essays, committing plagiarism, not meeting the submission deadline, and not providing a release form if requested.

All decisions by the Sponsors and evaluators are final, including but not limited to decisions concerning disqualification and selection of winners. Sponsors are not responsible for technical, hardware, or software malfunctions, lost or unavailable network connections, inability to access a website or fraud, incomplete, garbled, or delayed computer transmissions or inaccurate transcription of entry information, whether caused by Sponsors, users, or any third-party. If for any reason the contest is not capable of proceeding as planned, due to technical failures or for any other reason, the Sponsors reserve the right at their sole discretion to cancel, terminate, modify, or suspend the Contest.