



HIGH SCHOOL ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

A Constitutional Speech Contest



Pictured left to right: South Dakota American Legion Past Department Commander Kevin Hempel; 1st place - Lewis Carlyle, Rapid City; 2nd place - Emma Andrews, Beresford; 3rd place - Ian Cho, Spearfish; finalists Emma Schlachter, Gettysburg; Ada Sharp, Aberdeen; Ellowyn Schutt, Huron; Cash Martinez, Ethan; and Department Americanism Chair Carol Howitz.

WHAT TO DO

PREPARED ORATION

8-10 min.

ASSIGNED TOPIC

3-5 min.

POST DEADLINE

Dec. 31, 2026

Prepare an original oration on a phase of the U.S. Constitution, emphasizing the duties and obligations of citizens to our government. The prepared oration must take 8-10 minutes.

Also prepare to speak extemporaneously for 3-5 minutes on one of four Articles or Amendments selected as Assigned Topics for the 2027 Contest:

[oratorical-contest/oratorical-contest-assigned-topics](https://legion.org/oratorical/oratorical-contest-assigned-topics)

ENTERING AND COMPLETING THE CONTEST

1. Student: Notify your high school principal that you wish to enter.
2. School: The principal notifies the local American Legion Post.
3. Post contest: When a sponsoring Post has more than one entrant, the Post conducts a local contest and selects one winner.
4. Advancement: The Post winner advances to the District contest; the District winner advances to the Department (State) contest.

STATE CONTEST

SUNDAY, FEB. 21, 2027

10:30 a.m.

Cedar Shores Resort and Conference Center
Oacoma, South Dakota

The top contestant from each District advances to the State Finals. The contest begins at 10:30 a.m., or following the Sunday church service and adjournment of the 2027 South Dakota American Legion Mid-Winter Conference.

SCHOLARSHIP AND PRIZE MONEY

National Contest: May 14-16, 2027 | Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan

1ST PLACE

\$25,000

2ND PLACE

\$22,500

3RD PLACE

\$20,000

Each certified Department winner who participates in the first national round receives a \$2,000 scholarship. A first-round winner participating in the second round without advancing to the final round receives an additional \$2,000 scholarship.

Local: Awards are funded by the local American Legion Post.

District: Each winner receives a medal and advances to State; other prizes are the District's responsibility.

State: 1st - \$1,500, trophy, and school plaque; 2nd - \$1,000 and trophy; 3rd - \$500 and trophy; remaining finalists - \$200 and trophy. Scholarships may be used at any school above high school level within five years of graduation.

MATERIAL FOR STUDY

Contestants and coaches should study the national rules for the Annual High School Oratorical Scholarship Program at legion.org/oratorical, or write South Dakota American Legion State Headquarters, P.O. Box 67, Watertown, SD 57201. Teachers and librarians can help students prepare.

LOCAL CONTEST RULES

Notes may be used during the preparation period and delivery at a local contest. No notes or prompting are permitted above the Post level. Local chairpersons must secure three to five competent local citizens as judges. Send the Post first-place winner's name to the District Americanism Chairperson. All Post contests must be completed by Dec. 31, 2026.

DISTRICT CONTESTS

All eight District contests are listed together on this page. Contest dates are emphasized for quick reference.

DISTRICT 1

Counties: Butte, Corson, Dewey, Harding, Lawrence, Meade, Perkins, Ziebach
 Chair/Contact: Melanie McDonald; camina1228@proton.me; 15030 224th St., Box Elder, SD 57719
 Location: Piedmont American Legion Post 311, 101 Pine St., Piedmont
 Date/Time: **Jan. 10, 2027 | 1:00 p.m.**
 Storm date: Jan. 17, 2027 | same time and place

DISTRICT 2

Counties: Bennett, Custer, Fall River, Haakon, Jackson, Jones, Mellette, Pennington, Shannon, Todd
 Chair/Contact: Doug Harris; doughnut@gmail.com; 4913 Charmwood Dr., Rapid City, SD 57701
 Location: SDSM&T; Classroom Building, 501 E. Saint Joseph St., Rapid City
 Date/Time: **Jan. 3, 2027 | 10:00 a.m.**

DISTRICT 3

Counties: Gregory, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, Lyman, Potter, Stanley, Sully, Tripp
 Chair/Contact: Larry Madsen; larry_madsen@hotmail.com; 906 E. Commercial Ave., Gettysburg, SD 57442
 Location: Faith Lutheran Church Christian Living Center, 714 N. Grand Ave., Pierre
 Date/Time: **Jan. 17, 2027 | 2:00 p.m.** Storm date: Jan 24, 2027

DISTRICT 4

Counties: Brown, Campbell, Edmunds, Faulk, McPherson, Spink, Walworth
 Chair/Contact: Dale Strom; dale_strom@yahoo.com; 115 N. Kline St., Aberdeen, SD 57401
 Location: Aberdeen American Legion Post Home, Aberdeen
 Date/Time: **Jan. 10, 2027 | arrive 12:30 p.m.; contest 1:00 p.m.** Storm date: Jan. 17, 2027 | same time and place

DISTRICT 5

Counties: Brookings, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Marshall, Roberts
 Chair/Contact: Arlo Jurrens; arlo@century21gka.com; 48228 219th Ave., Elkton, SD 57026
 Location: Castlewood Community Center, 204 Main St., Castlewood
 Date/Time: **Jan. 9, 2027 | 1:00 p.m.**
 Storm date: Jan. 16, 2027 | same time and place

DISTRICT 6

Counties: Aurora, Beadle, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Kingsbury, Miner, Sanborn
 Chair/Contact: Ron Falor; ronancy@midstates.net; 225 E. Truck St., Kimball, SD 57355
 Location: Kimball American Legion Post, 232 S. Main St., Kimball
 Date/Time: **Dec. 12, 2026 | 1:00 p.m.**
 Storm date: Dec. 19, 2026 | same time and place

DISTRICT 7

Counties: Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Minnehaha, Moody, Union
 Chair/Contact: Dan Wyatt; dakotasarge@gmail.com; 23932 454th Ave., Madison, SD 57042
 Location: Humboldt Community Center, Humboldt
 Date/Time: **Jan. 10, 2027 | 1:00 p.m.**
 Storm date: Jan. 17, 2027 | same time and place

DISTRICT 8

Counties: Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Clay, Douglas, Hutchinson, Turner, Yankton
 Chair/Contact: Steve Mueller; 605-661-0694; stevemuel195@gmail.com
 Location: Springfield Community Center, Springfield
 Date/Time: **Jan. 16, 2027 | 10:00 a.m.**
 Storm date: Jan. 23, 2027 | same time and place

DISTRICT DEADLINE

District Chairpersons are in charge of District contests. All District contests must be completed on or before Jan. 31, 2027.

DISTRICT CHAIRPERSON RESPONSIBILITIES

Report the District winner immediately after the contest to Department Americanism Commission Chair Carol Howitz at 605-645-3411 or Carol.howitz@gmail.com, and to South Dakota American Legion State Headquarters at 605-886-3604 or maryjo@sdlegion.org.

DEPARTMENT ORATORICAL POINT OF CONTACT

Carol Howitz | 605-645-3411 | Carol.howitz@gmail.com

"All the great speakers were bad speakers at first."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson