



The Sixth Circuit Civics and Outreach Committee is hosting the **Fourth Annual Civics Contest!** Students in grades 9-12 from Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee are encouraged to submit original essays examining the significance of the **Bill of Rights** of the United States Constitution. The top entry receives a cash prize!

### PROMPT & GUIDELINES

On September 17, 1787, a majority of the delegates in attendance at the Constitutional Convention signed a newly developed United States Constitution. Many who did not sign, refused to do so because the document did not include a “bill of rights,” which they believed necessary to secure basic civil rights for citizens and define the limits of the federal government’s power. Despite some opposition, the Constitution became law on June 21, 1788, when New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify, following the Massachusetts Compromise and promise of amendments to come.

On December 15, 1791, following arduous debate and negotiation, three-fourths of the states ratified ten amendments to the Constitution, now known as the [Bill of Rights](#). These amendments guaranteed citizens many rights including freedom of speech, the right to bare arms, and the privilege against self-incrimination.

For over two centuries, the Constitution has remained in force because the framers successfully separated and balanced governmental powers to safeguard the interests of majority rule and minority rights, of liberty and equality, and of the federal and state governments. Although the Bill of Rights is two hundred years old, the amendments continue to have direct impact on our lives.

The Sixth Circuit Civics and Outreach Committee invites you to consider the preamble of the United States Constitution, which states: *"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America"* and answer this question: **Which amendment most strongly promotes the goals of the framers as articulated in the preamble of the Constitution?**

Choose one of the ten amendments in the [Bill of Rights](#) and, using relevant sources including [case law](#) and scholarly/peer reviewed journal articles, explain how the amendment you chose most strongly promotes the goals of the framers as articulated in the preamble.

**DEADLINE: MARCH 29, 2024**

## WHO MAY ENTER

The contest is open to high school students (grades 9–12) enrolled in public, private, parochial, and charter schools and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status in the four states that comprise the Sixth Circuit (Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee). Children of federal judges, chambers staff, and employees of federal court offices are not eligible to participate.

## ESSAY LENGTH, FORMAT, SUBMISSION, AND JUDGING

Essays should be between 500 and 1,000 words. Proper use of footnotes and bibliographies will be considered during judging but will not be included in the word count. Essays must be submitted via email as a Microsoft Word file to [mandy\\_shoemaker@ca6.uscourts.gov](mailto:mandy_shoemaker@ca6.uscourts.gov) by 11:59 PM on **Friday, March 29, 2024**.

Please follow these formatting guidelines:

- Use 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double-spaced text, with one-inch margins
- Include a title page with your first and last name, school (if applicable), grade level, city and state, email, and phone
- Do not include headers or footers with any identifying information such as your name
- Name your file: Firstname Lastname.docx (example: John Smith.docx)

Essays will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Clarity and effectiveness of expressing theme – 40 points
- Analysis of at least 3 sources – 40 points
- Grammar, spelling, composition, and formatting – 20 points

## Helpful Resources

[\*Constitution of the United States of America: Analysis and Interpretation\*](#) (Constitution Annotated)

[Bill of Rights](#) (Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute)

[How To Find Free Case Law Online](#) (Library of Congress Research Guide)

[Creating the Bill of Rights](#) (Library of Congress)

[Bill of Rights: The 1st Ten Amendments](#) (Bill of Rights Institute)

[America's Founding Documents](#) – The Bill of Rights (National Archives)

[National Constitution Center Media Library](#) (Constitutional Topics List – Bill of Rights)

[Constitution 101](#) – The Bill of Rights Lecture (National Constitution Center)

[The Amendments](#) (National Constitution Center)

Questions may be sent to [mandy\\_shoemaker@ca6.uscourts.gov](mailto:mandy_shoemaker@ca6.uscourts.gov).