

## 2023-2024 Theme

# “What are the greatest attributes of our Democracy?”

Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2023

Patriotic Audio Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$35,000 Award

### What is the Voice of Democracy Program?

Since 1947, the Voice of Democracy has been the Veterans of Foreign Wars' (VFW's) premier scholarship program. Each year, nearly 27,000 high school students compete for more than \$2 million in scholarships and incentives. Students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. This year's theme is, "What are the greatest attributes of our Democracy?"

### Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, state and national level. Department (State) winners receive an all-expense-paid trip to Washington DC, to tour the city, be honored by the VFW and its Auxiliary and receive their portion of \$171,000 in national awards, the top scholarship being \$35,000.

### The Rules

Who can enter?

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12 by the Oct. 31 deadline who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application for which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. Foreign exchange students, students age 20 or over, previous Voice of Democracy winners are ineligible.

What do I need to enter?

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or - 5 second max.) audio recording, typed essay and this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or VFW Post for judging. In addition you can submit your emailed entry form, be the sole author of your essay. The recording must be in your own voice and in English. Hearing/speech impaired students may submit a typed essay. For special instructions. No music, singing, poetry or sound effects are allowed. The body of the essay must not identify you in any way, (including, but not limited to your name, school, city, state, race, or national origin) although the recording & typed essay should be labeled with your name, to show ownership.

### Where Do I Submit My Entry?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post. Entries sent to VFW National will be returned. One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. If you need help finding a VFW Post, visit this website [vfw.org/FindaPost](http://vfw.org/FindaPost) to "Find A VFW Post." If you are getting in touch with them, you can contact your VFW Post directly. For assistance, please email us at [VFW National Headquarters at youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org)

### What Is the Deadline for My Entry?

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, Oct. 31, 2023. It is the responsibility of the student to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location by ensuring it is a participating Post.

### What Are the Judging Criteria?

Originality is worth 30 points:  
Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

Content is worth 35 points:  
Clearly express your ideas in an organized manner. Fully develop your theme and use transitions to move smoothly from one idea to another.

Delivery is worth 35 points:  
Speak in a clear and credible manner.

# 2023-2024 Official Entry Form

## Voice of Democracy Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy) \_\_\_\_\_ Grade in School \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Jacket Size \_\_\_\_\_

School Name, City, State \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

### To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post Level Voice of Democracy Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Post # \_\_\_\_\_

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Post Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

VFW Post Email \_\_\_\_\_

No. of students participating \_\_\_\_\_

No. of winners advanced to District \_\_\_\_\_

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarship awards \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian

(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Email \_\_\_\_\_

### To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Voice of Democracy Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Departments.

District Chairperson Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Dist. # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

## Participant Agreement for Students

### Advancing to National Level

I, [Name], parent/guardian and school to attend the Voice of Democracy National Finals in Washington, D.C. as a guest of the VFW National Organization. In consideration for permission to participate in the National Voice of Democracy Competition ("Competition") I do hereby, for myself, for my heirs, executors, administrators and assignees, waive, release and discharge all rights and claims which I have or which may hereafter accrue against the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and/or the Departments (state organizations) of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I understand that VFW will not be liable for such treatment. I further understand that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States retains the right to use this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

### To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

The winner will be notified that they are the first-place Department winner on \_\_\_\_\_.

For assistance contact:  
816.968.1155  
Email: youthscholarships@vfw.org

### Local VFW Post Information

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_

## I Have Read and Understand the Rules and Participant Agreement

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have only entered the competition once yearly if otherwise eligible. I understand that if it is found that I have entered any other Post's competition or used this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

Signature of Student Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

