



## Being an American: History Channel sponsors essay contest for students

U.S. high school students and their teachers are invited to participate in the Bill of Rights Institute's sixth annual Being an American Essay Contest.

The largest contest of its kind in the country, the Being an American Essay Contest explores the founding principles outlined in the Constitution.

The contest is administered by the Bill of Rights Institute, a nonprofit educational organization in the Washington, D.C., area devoted to educating young people about the Constitution and Founding principles. The 2011-12 contest is sponsored by the History Channel.

"This contest is unique in that it gives students the opportunity to think about the important founding principles communicated in our Constitution," said Jason Ross, Bill of Rights Institute Vice President of Education Programs. "This contest is vital to helping students see their Founding principles as a meaningful part of the American experiment of self-government."

Specifically, students are asked to share their thoughts on the Constitution by answering the following question: "How does the Constitution establish and maintain a culture of liberty?"

The top three student-winners from each of the five geographical regions will be awarded cash prizes of \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second and \$250 for third. Teacher sponsors for each student winner also will receive a cash prize of \$100.

"The contest not only honors and awards sponsoring teachers, but also equips them with free lesson plans and other supplemental materials that meet state and national academic standards so they can easily incorporate the essay contest into their classrooms. The contest is really a tribute to the excellent work teachers do in the important task of civic education," Ross said.

More than 80,000 students have participated in the essay contest since it began in 2006.

"We are pleased to support the Bill of Rights Institute's Being an American Essay Contest," said Libby O'Connell, SVP, Corporate Outreach and Chief Historian, History Channel. "The contest encourages students to think critically and truly makes the past relevant in their lives today."

Further information, including submission criteria, lesson plans and background information on the Constitution, Bill of Rights, Founders and the Founding principles is available at [www.BillofRightsInstitute.org/Contest](http://www.BillofRightsInstitute.org/Contest).

Ohio is part of the Mid-Western Region, while Pennsylvania is part of the North Eastern Region.

The contest is open to students in grades nine through 12 who are U.S. citizens or legal residents and are either attending public, private, religious, or charter schools, being home-schooled or participating in a GED or correspondence-school program but are no older than 19. Military bases and U.S. territories also are invited to participate.

Essays are to be no more 1,000 words. Entries will be judged by high- school teachers on adherence to the essay question, originality, organization, writing style and depth of analysis.

Dec. 15 is the deadline for submissions, and winners will be announced in February. Essay submissions should be made at [www.BillofRightsInstitute.org/Submit](http://www.BillofRightsInstitute.org/Submit).

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