

SEPARATION OF POWERS



CHECKS AND BALANCES

2019 High School Essay Contest

The lawyers and judges of the United States District Court, Middle District of Florida, through the Middle District Bench Bar Fund, and the members of the Jacksonville Chapter of the Federal Bar Association are pleased to invite students currently in grades 10 through 12 in counties in the Jacksonville Division of the Middle District of Florida (Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Duval, Flagler, Hamilton, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Suwannee, and Union) to participate in an essay contest.

Prompt

The Founding Fathers created a “divided government” by separating important powers among each of the three branches – executive, legislative, and judicial. To prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful, the Framers established a system of checks and balances. Some argue, however, the concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances undermine the government’s ability to swiftly and decisively respond to problems facing the nation.

Identify a historical or current event that exemplifies the concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances. Drawing on primary sources, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a “divided government.”

FIRST PLACE: \$2,000
SECOND PLACE: \$1,000
THIRD PLACE: \$500
FOURTH THROUGH TENTH PLACE: \$50
CLASSROOM GRANTS: \$500
To Teachers of the Top Three Winners



**ENTRIES MUST BE
SUBMITTED ONLINE**
VISIT WWW.FLMD.USCOURTS.GOV

Questions?

Contact Suzanne Judas, Community Outreach Coordinator,
communityoutreach@jaxfedbar.org, 904-910-0354

or

Kirsten Clement, Staff Attorney,
Kirsten_Clement@flmd.uscourts.gov, 904-301-6820

DEADLINE
NOON, OCTOBER 7, 2019

Sponsors

The lawyers and judges of the United States District Court, Middle District of Florida, through the Middle District Bench Bar Fund and the Jacksonville Chapter of the Federal Bar Association.

Who

The contest is open to students in counties in the Jacksonville Division of the Middle District of Florida: Baker, Bradford, Clay, Columbia, Duval, Flagler, Hamilton, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Suwannee, and Union. Students in grades 10 through 12 attending public, private, parochial and charter schools, and homeschooled students of equivalent grade status are invited to participate. Children, grandchildren, stepchildren, and members of the household of a federal judge, a federal court employee, or a member of the Jacksonville Chapter of the Federal Bar Association are excluded.

When

The essay and entry form must be submitted by noon EST on October 7, 2019. The entry form includes instructions for submitting your essay. Please complete your essay before submitting the entry form.

What

The essay must respond to the prompt. The essay must be the original work of the student submitting the essay.

Essay Requirements

- 1) Essay must be typed and submitted as a Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or WordPerfect (.wpd) document.
- 2) Essay must be double-spaced.
- 3) Essay must be in 12 pt. Times New Roman.
- 4) Essay may not exceed 1,000 words not including citations.
- 5) Essay must include a cover page that includes the full name of the student, the name of the school or "homeschooled," and the word count.
- 6) Citations must be placed in footnotes, endnotes, or bibliographies.

Essay Submission

Only one essay may be submitted per student. All essays must be submitted online. Hard-copy submissions will not be accepted.

To submit an essay, a student must:

- 1) Complete and submit the online contest entry form (located on the Middle District website: www.flmd.uscourts.gov); and
- 2) Upload an essay that complies with the "Essay Requirements." No identification information of the student may be included anywhere except on the cover page.

Judges

The essays will be judged by lawyers and judges in the Jacksonville Division. Their decisions will be final.

Criteria

- 1) Understanding of legal principles.
- 2) Identification of a historical or current event that exemplifies the concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances.
- 3) Clarity and effectiveness in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of a "divided government."
- 4) Grammar, spelling, and composition.

Recognition

Winners will be announced on or about November 11, 2019, and recognized at a special ceremony at the Bryan Simpson United States Courthouse on November 20, 2019. The Top Three Winners will also be invited to attend a luncheon on December 12, 2019. Additionally, the First Place Winner will be invited to shadow a judge at a mutually agreeable weekday and time.

Grounds for Disqualification

Submitting an essay that (1) is not the student's original, authored work; (2) misses the submission deadline; (3) provides fake entry information; (4) plagiarizes content; or (5) is submitted as a separate Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF document outside of the entry form.

License to Use Essays, Names, and Photographs

Winners will be required to submit a release allowing the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida to publish the essay in print publications and on court public websites. In addition, winners will be asked to provide and authorize use of photographs of themselves in contest-related promotional materials, which may include photographs taken at the November 20, 2019 ceremony and the December 12, 2019 luncheon.

