



**Polk County Bar Association**

**2014 Law Day  
Student Competition Winners**

**Dan Saar & Gail Sheridan-Lucht  
Law Day Committee Co-Chairs**



# Law Day 2014

## President Obama's Proclamation



May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014:

“More than two centuries ago, patriots battled to release America from the grip of tyranny. As these brave citizens defended their right to shape their own destiny, our Founders created a government of, by, and for the people -- rooted in the belief that just power derives from the consent of the governed. It is a system that can only function through the rule of law.



## Presidential Proclamation continued...

“This Law Day pays special tribute to the right to vote, the cornerstone of democracy. Many Americans won the franchise after generations of struggle, while others gave their lives so their children and grandchildren might one day enjoy what should have been their birthright. Thanks to women who picketed the White House and activists who marched on the National Mall, our laws finally recognized a truth that had always been self-evident -- that every citizen should have a voice in our democracy. Over the centuries, we have made legal changes that eliminated formal voting restrictions based on wealth, race, and sex and that extended the right to vote to younger adults. Today, our laws continue to protect this fundamental right, laws like the Voting Rights Act, the National Voter Registration Act, the Help America Vote Act, and the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.”



## Presidential Proclamation continued...

“Despite this hard-fought progress, barriers to voting still exist, and the right to vote faces a new wave of threats. In some States, women may be turned away from the polls because they are registered under their maiden name; in others, seniors who have been voting for decades may suddenly be told they cannot vote because they do not have a particular form of identification. As we reflect on the trials and triumphs of generations past, we must rededicate ourselves to preserving those victories in our time. Earlier this year, a bipartisan commission I appointed recommended a series of common-sense reforms to protect the right to vote, curb the potential for fraud, and ensure no one has to wait more than a half hour to cast a ballot. States and local election officials should implement these recommendations. In addition, the Congress should demonstrate its commitment to our fundamental right by updating the Voting Rights Act.”



## Presidential Proclamation continued...

“Let us mark Law Day by recognizing the institutions that uphold the rule of law in America. Let us vow to keep safe our founding creed. And let us remember that opportunity requires justice, and justice requires the right to vote.

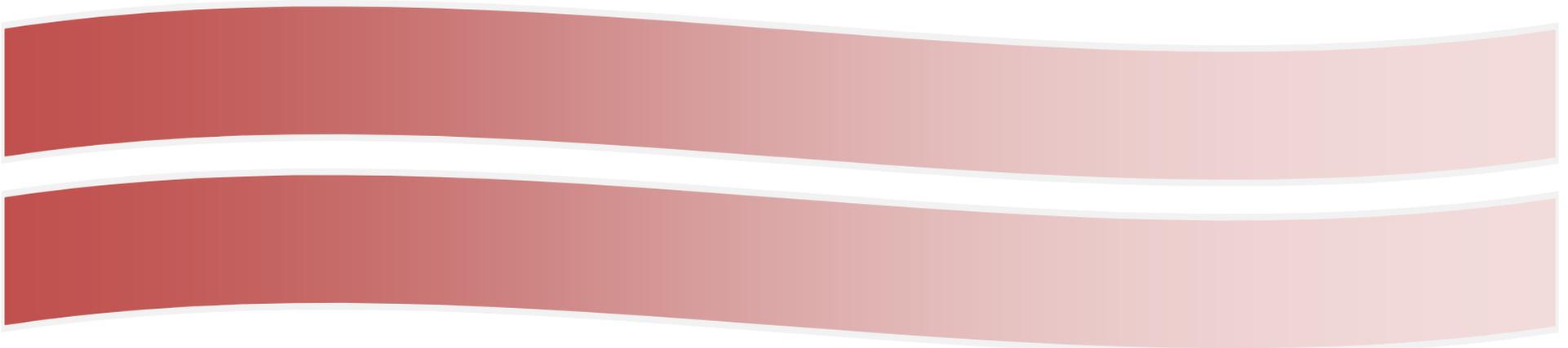
NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, in accordance with Public Law 87-20, as amended, do hereby proclaim May 1, 2014, as Law Day, U.S.A. I call upon all Americans to acknowledge the importance of our Nation's legal and judicial systems with appropriate ceremonies and activities, and to display the flag of the United States in support of this national observance.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand fourteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-eighth.



# “Why Every Vote Matters”

Voting is the very foundation of democracy. For this reason, it is imperative to establish and protect this right for every citizen.





# Middle School Essay Winners:

**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Shantal Hernandez Guerrero  
Prairie Ridge Middle School, Ankeny

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place:** Casey Hodson  
Summit Middle School, Johnston

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place:**

Ryan Holst  
Prairie Ridge Middle School

Ben Wonderlin  
Saint Theresa Catholic School



## 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Shantal Hernandez Guerrero “Why Every Vote Matters in the United States”

Life as we know it today has had many different stages, sometimes violently causing deaths, or sometimes just raising a rebellious spirit, in order to get a better future. Many changes have been made over the years throughout the history of the United States, such as the right to vote. If somebody in the country is not allowed to vote, the nation wouldn't be accomplishing its purpose of having equality among all citizens. We can assume it all started since our independence from Great Britain, when we started realizing that we should be able to be autonomous with our own decisions. Or maybe it started when Martin Luther King Jr. helped African American people and other minorities get their civil rights as everyone else had. Along the way, such rebellions have improved our country's point of view towards the rights we must have, the ones we were born with, and lead our country to a future in which every person in the United States of America becomes part of the nation's vote.

In order to be able to understand the part each vote in the country contributes, we have to understand its meaning first, what does it stand for? For we Americans, the vote represents a voice, a choice. These voices are expressed through a ballot. The vote tells our opinions about politics, leaders, or ideas and are heard by those who have the power to make decisions that will affect the future of the nation. We are the nation. All of those decisions affect every single one of us. As our American history recalls, before January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1863 there was not a concrete document that outlawed voting discriminations such as color, gender, religion, race, or to natural origin. This date is considered important in the United States because of the change it made, which I personally consider a better change for this democracy. It provides voting equality among all citizens, because we are all the same, we have the same rights, we can all vote.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Shantal Hernandez Guerrero

## “Why Every Vote Matters in the United States”

**Continued...** As well as the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, the “Voting Rights Act of 1965” shows how evolution against voter discrimination started taking form. We don’t judge a book by its cover, why should we judge a person by their physical appearance? All the leaders that helped make these changes, Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, even Rosa Parks were defied because of their actions. They were challenged not once but thousands of times. But they believed in change, in development for the nation. Sometimes people don’t notice that these are the leaders that are most remembered by the citizens I didn’t notice it until I wrote this essay. Were they afraid? Uncertain? Sure, but they were persistent on what they believed and these are the changes that make this nation the way it is, successful and fair.

Not only do the actions of a country make it prominent, but its documents do too. In the United States we have many of these documents which prove our support for voter equality. The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment prohibits the denial of a citizen’s right to vote. This amendment protected the men’s right to vote, but then came the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment which opened the door for women to be able to vote also. With this amendment both men and women were now able to vote, as long as they had the money to pay the tax. The 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment stated “no poll tax is allowed or failure to pay any other tax shall prevent a person from voting” which gave more citizens the opportunity to express their choice in government without having to worry about money. With the changes made over this period of time now everybody could vote, but there was another issue found; the people younger than 21 years old, were not considered responsible or wise enough to make such an important decision, so the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment was formed. This amendment explained that all people 18...



## 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Shantal Hernandez Guerrero “Why Every Vote Matters in the United States”

**Continued...**

Or older shall not be abridged of their right to vote, this way the age was specified on those who could vote. I ask myself, what would have happened if none of these amendments had been created? What if the government hadn't noticed that we needed them? These questions make it clear that this government is actually governed by its own people and that our leaders and we followers helped to make this change.

As I learned more and more about the importance of having the right to vote, I began noticing that right after an issue had a solution found by our government, another issue appeared. The question is, who will be our next Abraham Lincoln? How will our next Rosa Parks refuse to do something a group of people consider wrong and others don't? Well, I think anyone in this admirable country can express their thoughts and make what we consider a better change in the future. But without the vote, how is the government going to know what each person considers best? It is important that when the right time arrives, we all vote to raise the voice of the people and rule this democracy. The United States is a nation full of people with different perspectives, but in the end, we are all in this together, we can and should all vote.



# Middle School Poetry Winners:

**1<sup>st</sup> Place: Harshini Abbaraju**  
**Johnston Middle School, Johnston**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Jacob Wang**  
**Northview Middle School, Ankeny**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Olivia Appel**  
**Merrill Middle School**

# 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Harshini Abbaraju - “Imagine”



Imagine a government for which everyone casts their vote  
A government where voicing your opinion of the ballot, they promote:

A government where whites and blacks work together  
A government where corruption and greed are demolished forever

A government where the utmost priority is to protect the Constitution  
A government where every accused gets his contribution and retribution

A government where a poor man is helped up on his feet  
A government where we strive to assist the farmers of our meat

A government where selfless service is present  
A government where we care for the billionaire AND the peasant

A government where the love of God is not necessary  
A government where the respect for His followers is customary

A government where freedoms are upheld and cherished  
A government where we make sure that all kids are nourished

A government where we give education its needed priority  
A government where we respect the rights of the minority

A government where it, itself, is the nation  
A government where “Of the People, By the People, and For the People,”

Is not just a quotation.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Jacob Wang - “Faltering Distortions”



Wandering around the landscape  
Of my conflicted mind  
I stumble across Skepticism

*Does it matter? Will anyone hear me?*  
These trickles of thought drip down  
Into puddles of doubt  
Drowning out the clamoring

*Support him! Yes we can! Believe in America*  
trying to find my personal opinions  
Below the heap of other's wishes  
Wondering whether these thoughts are genuine at all

Within the battle of influences  
As each party crowds for more attention  
I find myself pushed  
Into an ever smaller corner

Try as I might  
I push away the instigating  
                    nagging, insinuating  
                    and diseased riddled advertisements

And find that  
Below the flowing abundance of misleading information

I cannot know if my ballot will go to the person that will help us  
I cannot know if my vote's promises will even be kept  
I cannot know if my choice will better the world  
I cannot know if my vote will even matter  
I can only hope it does

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Olivia Appel – “Same Answers”



Walk up the steps,  
open the door,  
fill out some forms,  
quietly vote,

But how does this help?  
The answers are the same,  
Every Vote Counts.

How does filling in a small little circle do anything?

The answers are the same,  
Every Vote Counts.

I don't see it!!!

How does my ballot affect what happens to the president, to the  
congresswoman

To the senator, to anybody?  
The answers are the same,  
Every Vote Counts.

Now, I can't take it.

The same answers diminish my strength.

I vote.

On my television screen the next morning,  
I see something.

It says that the president, the congresswoman and the senator all won  
their races by

One vote.

That vote was mine the reporter says.

My eyes widen in shock  
Every Vote Counts.



# Middle School Visual Art Winners:

**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Ryan Sleister & Michael Lu  
Prairie Ridge and Holy Trinity School

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place:** Zoey Tucker  
Saint Theresa Catholic School, Des Moines

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place:** Maya Char & Jennifer Ly  
Saint Theresa Catholic School, Des Moines



# 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Ryan Sleister & Michael Lu “Every Vote Matters Game”

Object of the Game:

To move along the circular track by correctly answering questions about voting and government. The 1<sup>st</sup> player to reach the VOTING BOOTH wins.





## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Zoey Tucker “Every Vote Matters”

### Description:

For my visual arts option I made 9 flags and arranged them so they were in the shape of a globe. I then cut out people holding a “VOTE” flag or ballot. This is to represent that people, all around the world should vote because every vote matters. One vote can change the whole outcome of things.

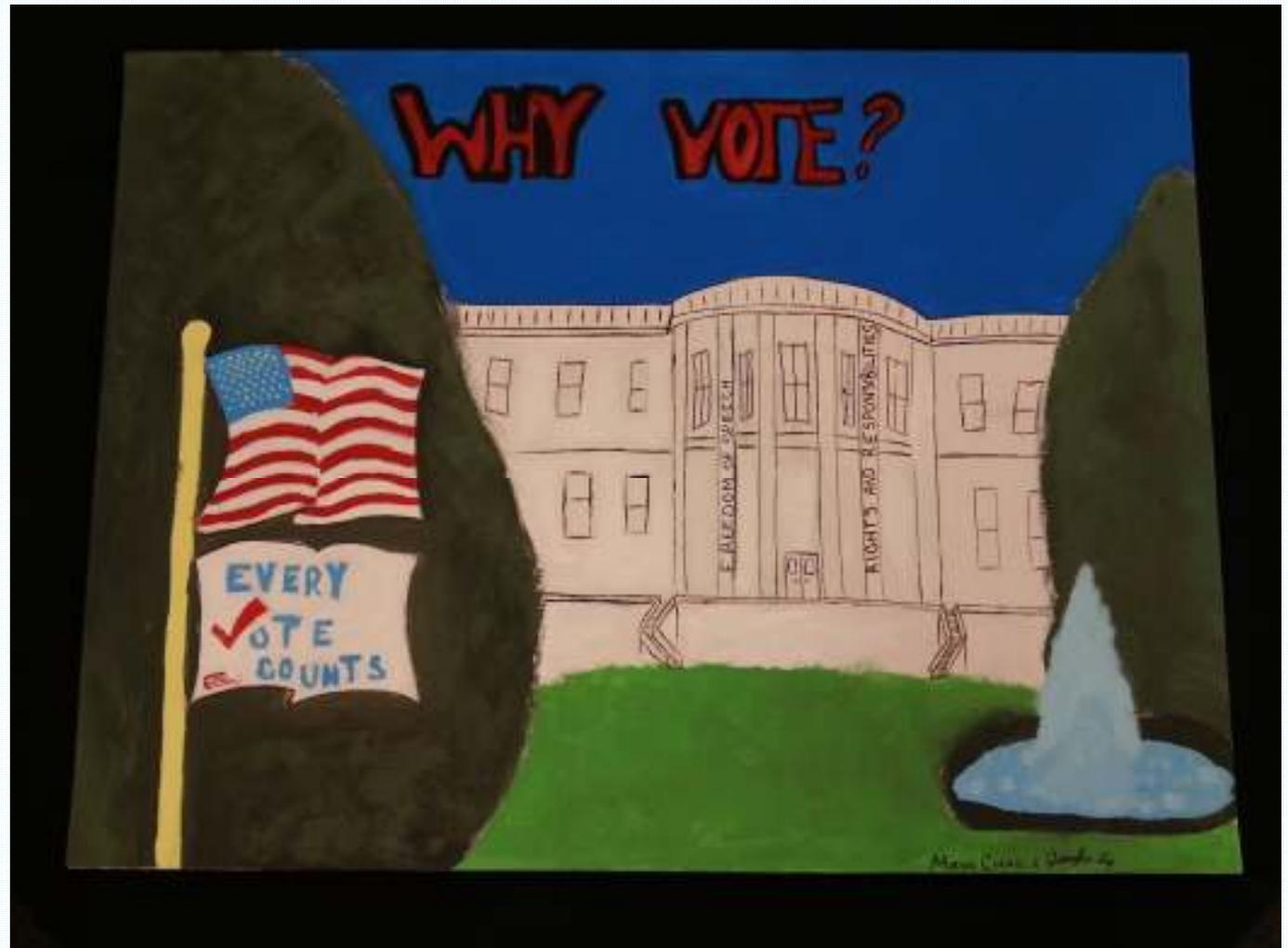




## 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Maya Char & Jennifer Ly “Every Vote Counts”

### Description:

Why vote? You vote because every vote counts. Our world and everything we do revolves around the government. We vote for the president. They vote for the laws we have to follow. We vote to make a difference, and every vote changes our lives. Sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. We vote because we care.





# Middle School Music & Performing Arts:

**1<sup>st</sup> Place: Adam Jackson & Niall Moore  
Saint Theresa Catholic School, Des Moines**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Hailey Conklin & Persephone Snyder  
Meredith Middle School, Des Moines**



## 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Adam Jackson & Niall Moore Saint Theresa Catholic School

### Description:

Our video was supposed to be a humorous one. The whole plot of our movie is George Washington going to the future and showing the people in 1778 how voting will matter and the history of voting. We chose the time period and George Washington because he created our nation and we has was a major character in our country's history. We go through the times when the African Americans began voting and when women could vote. These two times in our history were important because one, everyone in America were getting their rights. Also, America got its justice because now everyone's opinion was put into account to pick our political leaders. Also, Kermit the Frog is our narrator.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Hailey Conklin & Persephone Synder Meredith Middle School

Our video shows pictures of “minorities” not being allowed to vote and being excluded representing when minorities were not allowed to vote. We chose this topic for our video and poem because minorities were excluded from some of the same rights that everyone should have. The Declaration of Independence states; “Every man shall be created equal.”

By now allowing the minorities to vote our ancestors took away their rights. Even today voting is extremely important to our country because it can affect our future. We need to take voting seriously because not that long ago not everyone had the right to vote for their future so now that we have the chance to steer our future we should take it into consideration to try and make it worthwhile. We need to realize that people who have had the right to vote since they were 18 and didn't have to fight for the right to vote have taken it for granted and think it is something unimportant. We need to educate all children and teach them the importance of voting and all the effects their vote or lack of a vote can have on our nation's future.



# High School Essay Winners:

**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Peter Beebe  
Johnston Middle School

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place:** Morgan Bump  
Johnston Middle School

**3<sup>rd</sup> Place:**

Sydney Samples  
Saydel High School

Richelle Manuel  
Ankeny Centennial High School



## 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Peter Beebe Johnston Middle School

“A problem exists for the United States. The proportion of its citizens that actually vote in national elections has decreased dramatically over the past several decades,” said Daniel S Roberts, from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Voter turnout rates have continued to be at their lowest points since the late 1700s and are still low today according to Roberts. This is a problem. Although there are more people voting, there is a smaller percentage of eligible voters showing up at elections. Every vote matters in order to ensure that the ideas of the everyday American represented through the government.

The point of our form of a democratic government is so every American gets the chance to vote for the people who make our government run. According to a study conducted by *The Atlantic Cities* after the 2008 election, it was discovered that approximately 29.2% of registered voters that did not vote, said that it was inconvenient/too difficult to vote or to get to the polling station. The inability for Americans to get to the polls is not the only reason for not voting.



## **1<sup>st</sup> Place: Peter Beebe Johnston Middle School**

Another reason outlined by the same research, show that the choice of candidates also plays a role into the voter turnout. According to *The Atlantic Cities*, 15% of white citizens said they did not vote because they were unhappy with the choice for candidates. This number was double the percentages of the other racial groups. This information shows that the candidates were unable to draw voters.

According to George Mason University, in Presidio County, Texas, one of the poorest in the nation, 6 of 7 of the precincts, had sub-50% turnout rates, with one precinct barely elapsing 23%. These precincts are mainly poor and urban areas. Not only is this problem in urban areas, it is also present in the rural areas of the country. According to George Mason University the voter turnout for West Virginia was at 46.3%. This percentage moved West Virginia to 50<sup>th</sup> in the country, taking the long reigning crown away from Hawaii. If the voting rates were to raise then the people would be able to make changes that they really care about to make the United States a better democratic government.



## 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Peter Beebe Johnston Middle School

The fact of the matter is that the vote is unable to clearly represent the American people in the democratic government. The elections have become games to get to the top, not to represent the American people. The candidates believe that the best way to win is to focus on getting the most votes, not raising the number of total votes. According to George Mason University, the average voter rates for the past 3 presidential elections, was at 58.97%, lower than the majority of other democratic countries like Austria, Sweden, and Italy, which had to close to 80%. The U.S. is no longer anywhere close to the top in democratic superiority. In order to raise the United States, we have to know that every vote matters.

### Works Cited:

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# High School Poetry Winners:

**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Lavina Kalwani  
Johnston High School

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place:**

**Shivani Kumaresan**  
Central Academy

**Andris Kirsis**  
Dowling Catholic High School



## 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Lavina Kalwani

Chains hung across their weary backs  
Rusted and heavy  
Every solemn day a battle

Undignified death  
Voters give the greatest gift capable of a human... of humanity  
To these crippled souls pressed against iron cages –

Cold stares with enough venom to kill  
Shoved into submission  
Coming home with broken

Darkened hearts  
Defying blind laws determining character  
By color  
Their eyes a fire that grew but stronger  
Until each vote combined  
To give the greatest gift capable of a human... of humanity  
Fulfilling the destiny that hung on their chapped lips –

And now? We live in adventure

There are lies  
Behind locked mahogany doors  
Let us  
How?

between

and unjustified life

freedom

bones

and

equality

we live in ambition

we

live in love

but underneath this golden surface

there is greed

rise

Well

One vote can  
change  
the world

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Shivani Kumaresan “The Continuing Struggle”



It was never free  
In most other places, it still isn't.  
It's something we take for granted  
Even though we died fighting.

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 was passed  
As a means to protect African American's civil rights.  
This guaranteed neither equality nor voting rights.

As an attempt to correct this,  
The Fifteenth Amendment pushed its way past congress  
To secure African Americans' voting rights  
Yet African Americans still faced  
A swarm of oppressions.

Jim Crows laws were created,  
Grandfather clauses, poll taxes, literacy tests,  
Specifically targeting African Americans  
And abolishing their right to vote.

Nearly 100 years later,  
Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act,  
Completely restricting any discrimination in voting.  
But the struggle continues.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Shivani Kumaresan “The Continuing Struggle”



### Continued...

Even within the past five years,  
Many voting restrictions have been placed on minority voters.  
In place like South Carolina, Florida, and Texas  
Voting ID laws have been passed,  
Targeting low-income minorities and their right to vote  
Many continue to protest these restrictions  
In an effort to preserve the equality of our nation.

Although many Americans view voting as an inherent right,  
We need to remember and honor  
The struggle others faced to get here.  
The right to vote constitutes an immense majority  
Of America's democracy,  
One founded upon the principles  
Of freedom and justice for all.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Andris Kirsis



A man rests  
at home

Lazy  
unwilling to move

His vote doesn't count

A woman sits  
at work

Things to do  
can't get off

Her vote doesn't count

A man stands  
outside the booth

Can't vote  
no ID

His vote doesn't count

A woman waits  
in a wheelchair

Forgotten  
by her ride

Her vote doesn't count

### Continued...

America waits

Eagerly

News announces

no one voted

No one's vote counted

America withers

The next four years

Unpopular leader

only won because

No one voted



# High School Visual Art Winners:

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

Integrity Narcisse  
Roosevelt High School

Claudia Tice  
Johnston Middle School

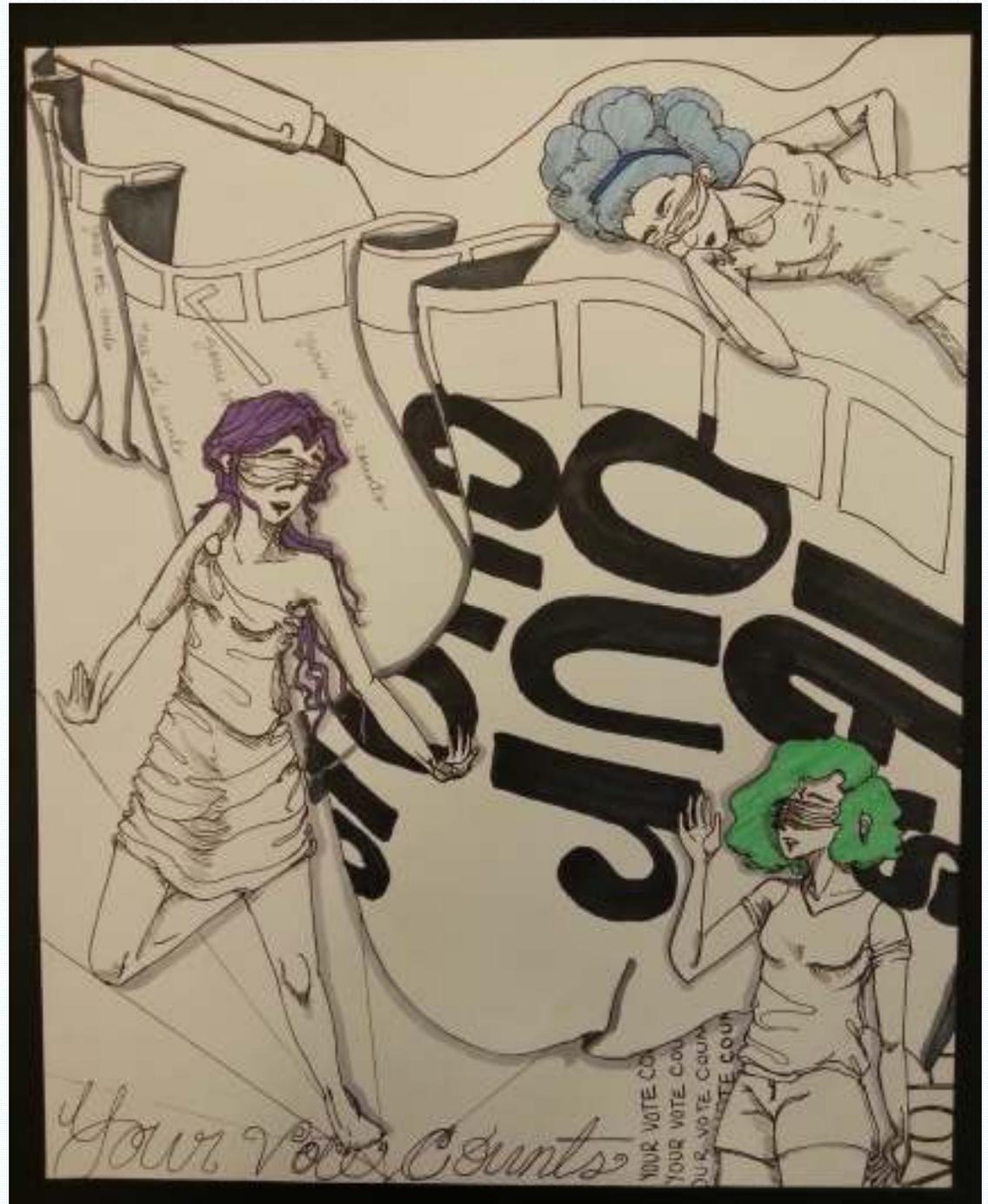
2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Jillian Gabby  
Johnston Middle School



1<sup>st</sup> Place:  
Integrity Narcisse  
“The Muses of Justice”

Description:

This piece is centered around the idea of inspiring people to vote. Taking advantage of my voting right is something that I am eager to do once I turn eighteen. For some, this task seems daunting and useless. The Muses are there to get people to realize the importance and impact that each individual has when they participate in voting.





## 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Claudia Tice “Why Every Vote Matters”

### Description:

My painting looks at the topic of “Why Every Vote Matters” as a puzzle. The flag represents America, and the puzzle pieces represent the votes of the American people. Every piece of a puzzle is needed to create a whole picture. If one piece is missing, then a puzzle isn’t complete, just like what happens if one person doesn’t vote.





**2<sup>nd</sup> Place:**  
**Jillian Gabby**  
**“Path to Digression”**

**Description:**

My visual artwork is a path. A path of people who worked for the right to vote and achieved it... I hope my artwork will leave you wondering if all this work be for not. Americans are ignoring this gift that we are so privileged to have as a right; a vote.

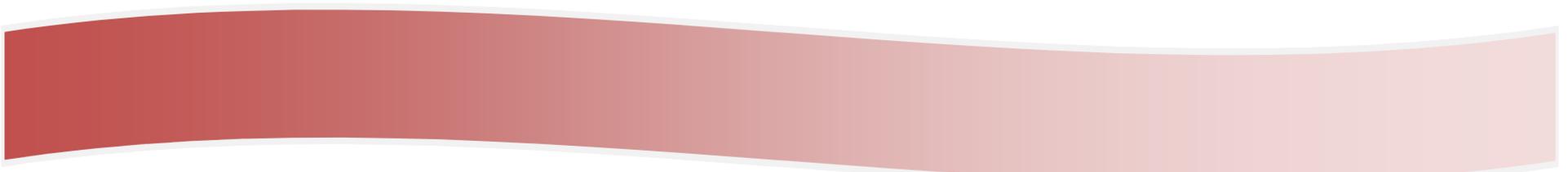




# High School Music & Performing Arts:

**1<sup>st</sup> Place: Addi Seybert  
Johnston Middle School**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Anna Losen & Emily Poss  
Johnston Middle School**





## 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Addi Seybert “12 Reasons to Vote”

### Description:

The purpose of this song is to use humor to encourage people to vote. It exaggerates catastrophes that could happen if people don't vote and also explains why voting is important. Though none of the scenarios are particularly plausible, the song is catchy enough that people will remember it if they ever have second thoughts about voting or even just don't want to do it. The main goal is to get people to be a little more enthusiastic about voting.



**2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Anna Losen & Emily Poss  
Johnston Middle School  
“Why Every Vote Matters”**

**Description:**

We as students need to know the importance of voting. One day we will be voting ourselves, and if we do not care then how is that vote important? Our song shows the theme of, “Why Every Vote Matters” for many reasons. It states, “Voting rights help our government stay together like cement,” meaning without them our government would fall apart. “Without your vote, our country could shatter,” is similar to this.

It also says, “if we don’t vote we might pay with a bad leader everyday,” which means you need to vote to try and prevent our country from having a bad leader. Our song also puts emphasis on the fact that your vote is important to keep our country together.

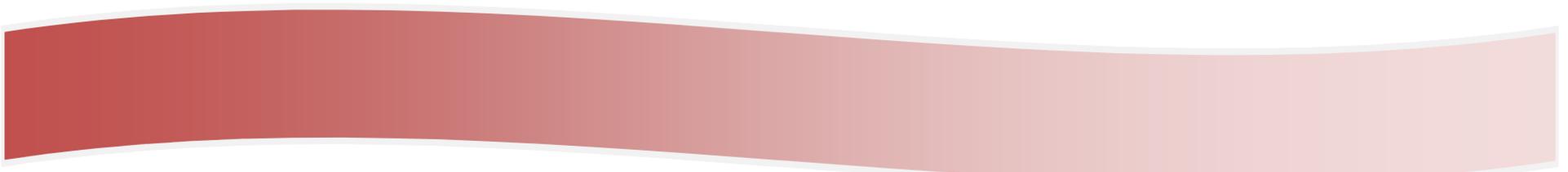


# Teacher Awards: Best Classroom Participation

Ali Bennett, Saint Theresa Catholic School

Brenda Smrdel, Johnston Middle School

John Stratton, Prairie Ridge Middle School





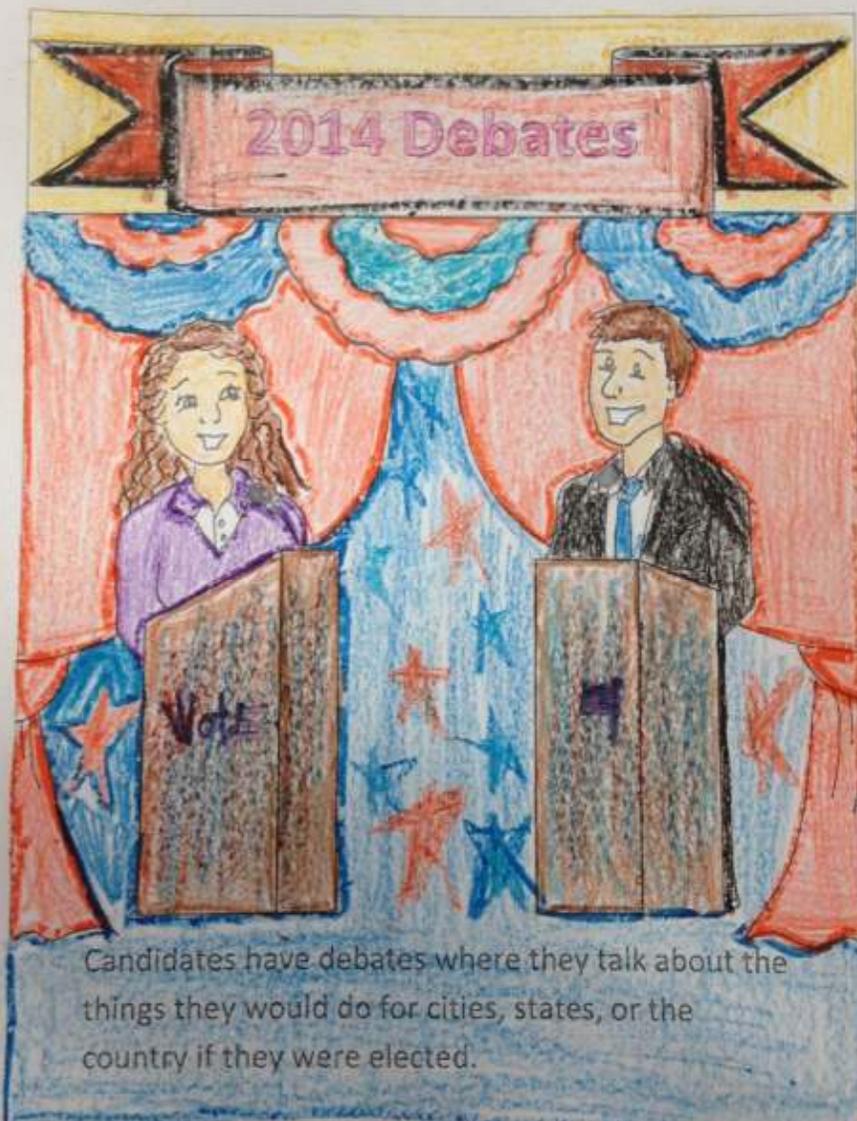
# ARAG Law Day Contest Jackson Elementary:

## Coloring Contest Winners:

Ashleigh Bell, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade – Banning’s class  
Kendall Mass, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade – Lothi-Baccam’s class  
Zoey Guerra, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade – Britt’s class

Mikaela Treptow, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade – Hurley’s class  
Nataly Davila, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade – Wulkow’s class  
Shayla Lo, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade – Donahey’s class

Ashleigh Bell  
2<sup>nd</sup> Grade  
Banning's class

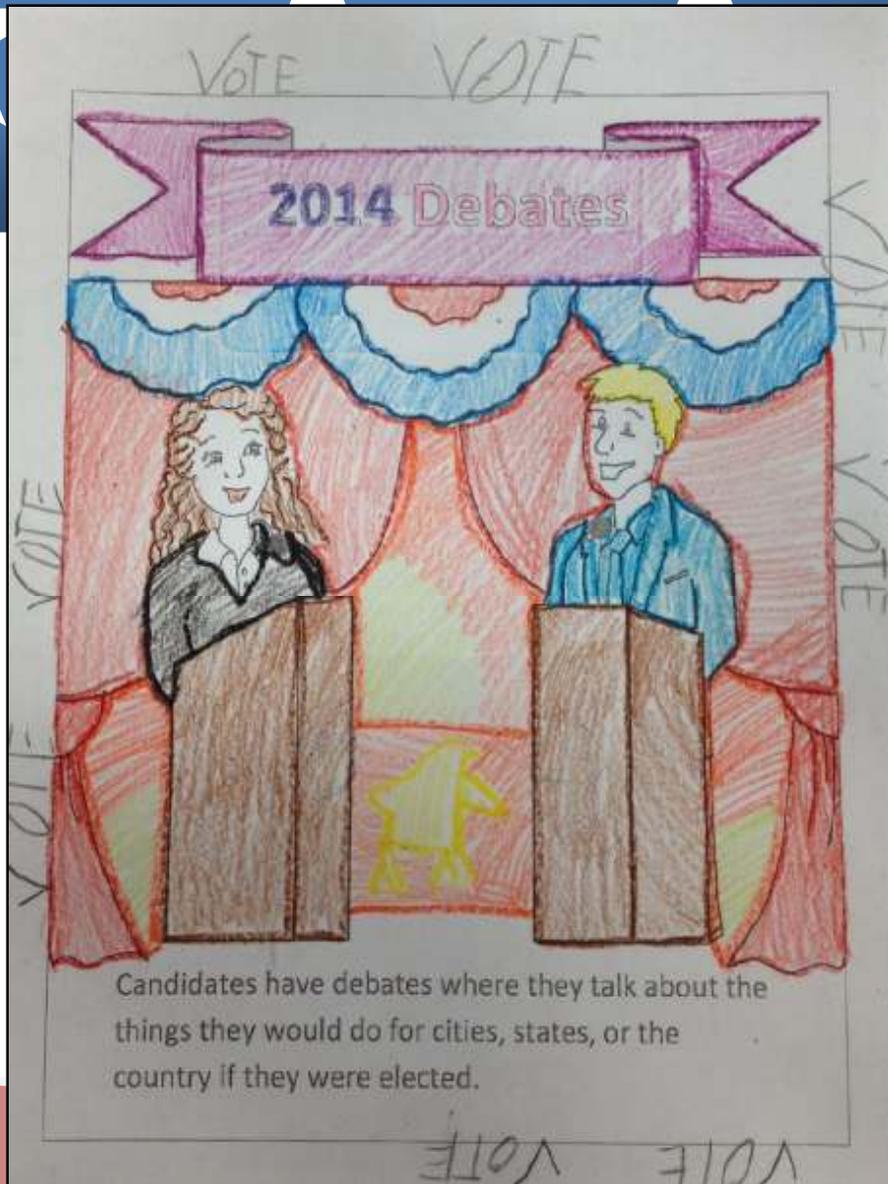




Kendall Mass  
 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade  
 Lothi-Baccam

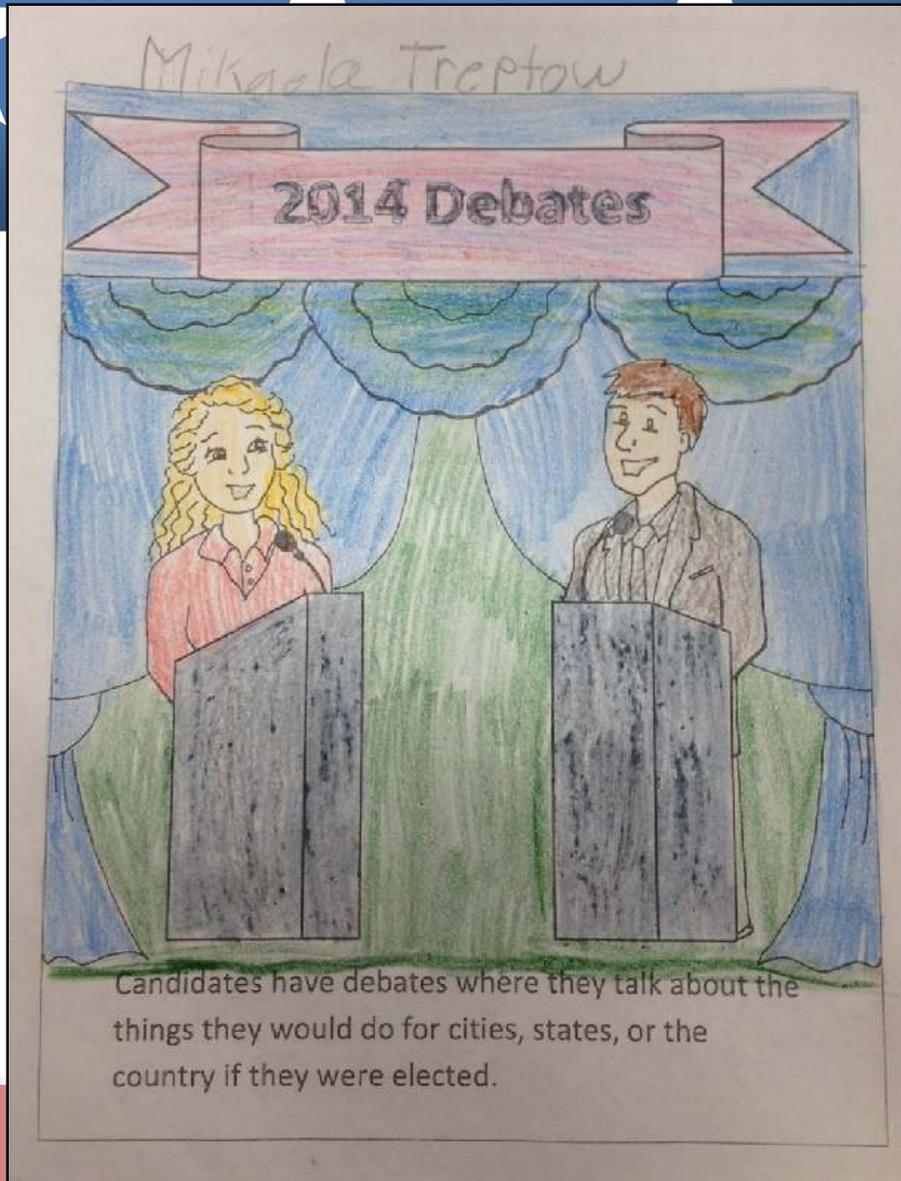


Zoey Guerra  
1<sup>st</sup> Grade  
Britt's class



Candidates have debates where they talk about the things they would do for cities, states, or the country if they were elected.

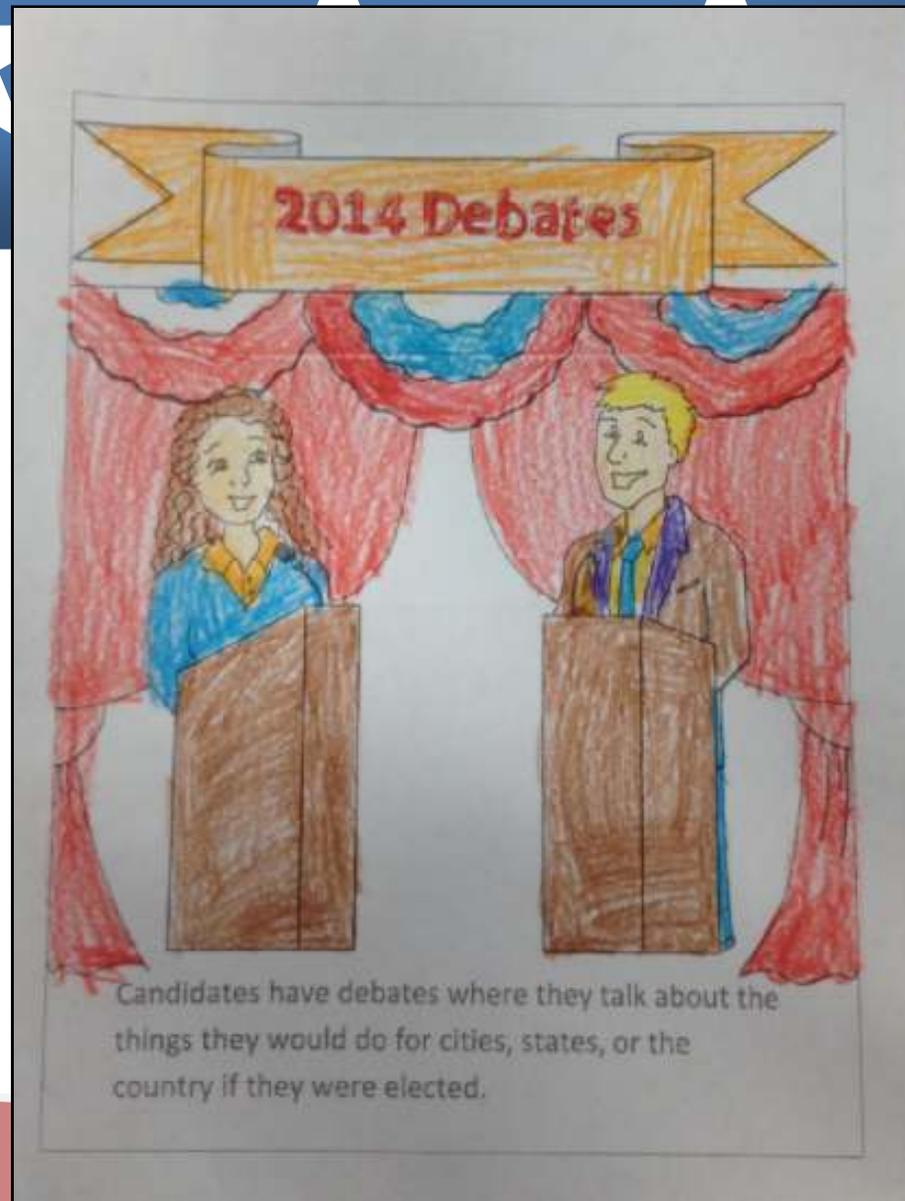
**Mikaela Treptow**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Grade**  
**Hurley's class**



Nataly Davila  
2<sup>nd</sup> Grade  
Wulkow's class



Shayla Lo  
1<sup>st</sup> Grade  
Donahey's class





# ARAG Law Day Contest Jackson Elementary:

## Poster Contest Winners:

Naomi Khounkhong, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade – Overturf's class

Allison Thomas, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade – Minick's class

Ka'liyah Moore, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade – Pfannebecker's class

Stephanie Alonzo, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade – Shirley's class

Anelia Valadez, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade – Miller's class

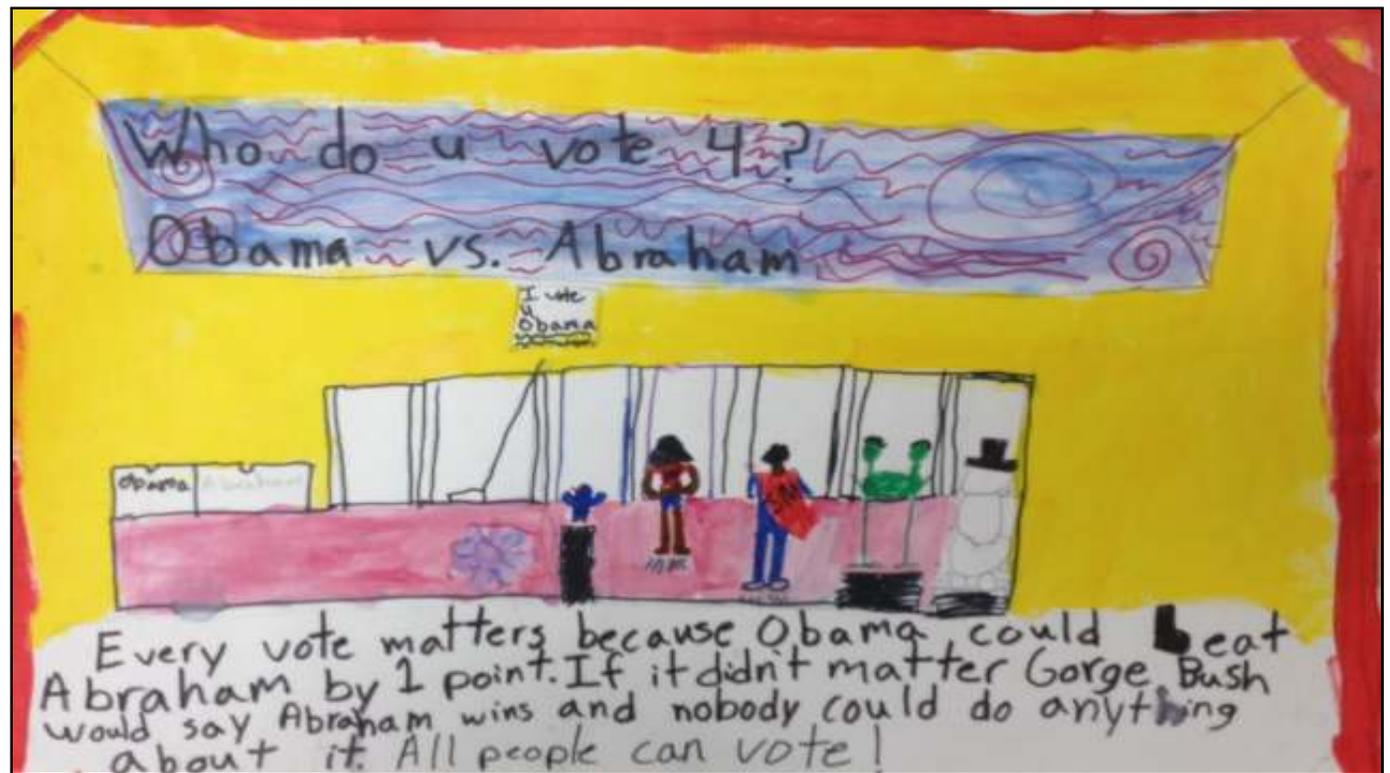


Naomi Khounkhong  
5<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Overturf's class



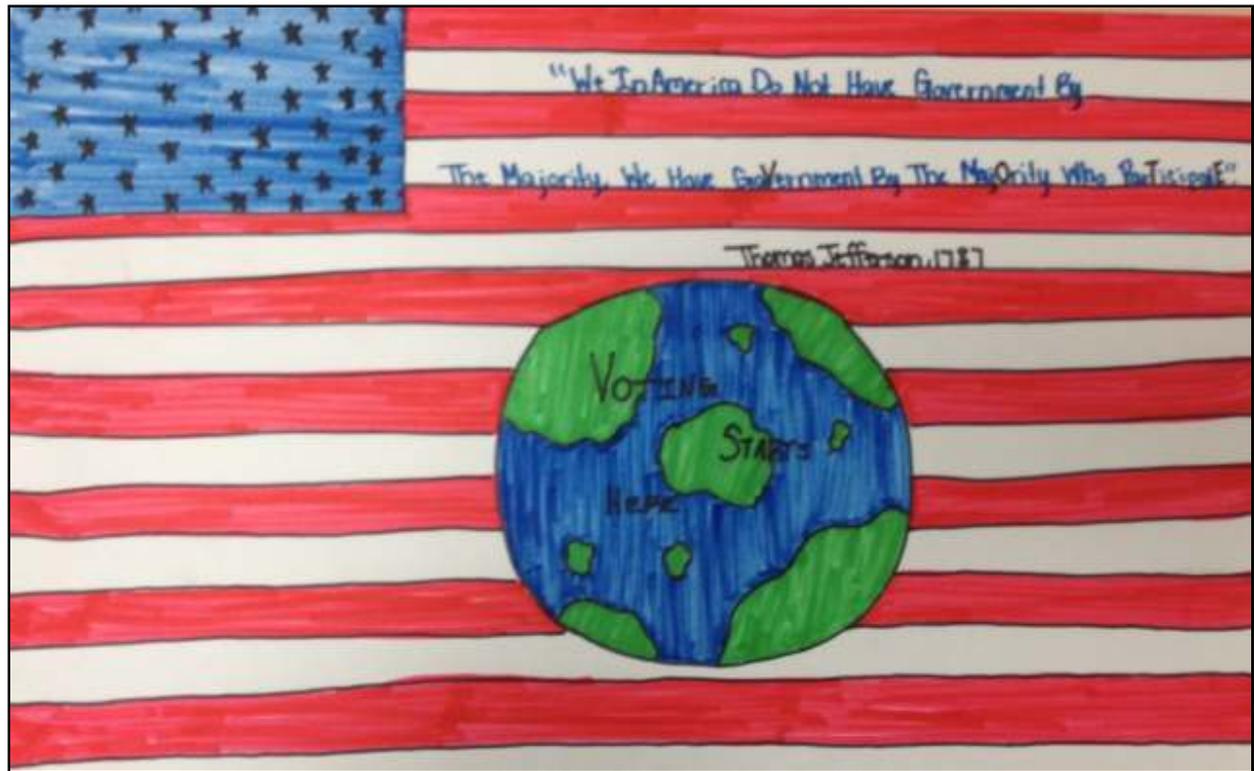


Allison Thomas  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Minick's Class



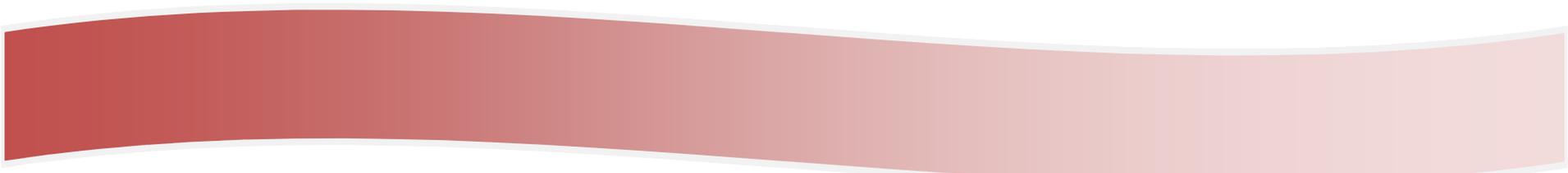


Ka'liyah Moore  
5<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Pfannebecker's class





Stephanie Alonzo  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Shirley's class





Anelia Valadez  
4<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Miller's class





# Polk County Bar Association 2014 Law Day



PowerPoint presentation  
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