



Law Day Ceremony

May 1, 2024

Iowa Judicial Branch Building
1111 East Court Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa



*Welcome from Polk County Bar Association
President Stacie Codr*

*Special guest speaker at the Awards Ceremonies:
Anthony Gaughan
Drake University Professor of Constitutional Law and Election Law*

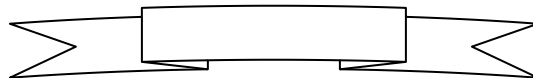
PCBA Law Day Contest Winners

Awards Ceremonies in Courtroom:

*Teacher Awards
Student Awards
Closing Remarks*

Optional Tour of the Building and Grounds

Reception in the Light Court



Polk County Bar Association 2024 Law Day Competition

Each year the American Bar Association and the Polk County Bar Association recognize Law Day to help foster education and a deeper understanding of the legal system. The Polk County Bar Association gives Polk County area students a chance to get creative with the law as part of our annual Law Day celebration. Students in grades K through 12 are invited to compete in the visual arts, music & performing arts, technology, essay, and poetry categories.

Law Day has been celebrated on or around May 1 since 1958 when President Dwight Eisenhower signed the proclamation declaring it a day to celebrate and strengthen the American heritage of liberty, justice, and equality under the law. Voices of Democracy is the theme for 2024. In recent years, tensions in our democratic system have revealed deep divisions in American society. These divisions are aggravated by incivility in public discourse and insufficient understanding among many people about the Constitution and the way American government works. Together, however, we can collaborate to overcome our differences, resolve our disputes, and preserve our democracy and republic.

We wish to express our deep appreciation to the Polk County Bar Association Law Day Committee for its continuing support of the Law Day program.

Enjoy the fruits of the students' creative labors!

*Laura Lockwood
Chair, Polk County Bar Association Law Day Committee*



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presents
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Thank you to the following sponsors for their generous donations, which make the Law Day event possible, and a rewarding experience for students and teachers!

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Grades K-5 (Elementary School) Winners

Elementary School Coloring Competition

*1st Place - Vada, Ankeny
2nd Place - Alexis, Ankeny
3rd Place - Monroe, Ankeny*

Elementary School Essay Competition

*1st Place - Brian Meurer, Ankeny Northwest
2nd Place - Cecilia Brugman, Ankeny Heritage
3rd Place - Ryne Thomason, ADM Meadow View Elementary
Honorable Mention: Henry Burnley, Ankeny, Northeast*

Elementary School Poetry Competition

*1st Place - Adelyn Lupkes, Ankeny Westwood
2nd Place - Moriah Mueller, Ankeny, Westwood
3rd Place - Madeline Nail & Alida Jones, Ankeny, Northeast*

Elementary School Poster Competition

*1st Place - Lucy Mitchell, Ashland Ridge Elementary, Ankeny
2nd Place - Vathsana Khamhuang, Howe Elementary, Des Moines
3rd Place - Leala Cortez, Howe Elementary, Des Moines*

Elementary School Performing Arts Competition

*1st Place - Gwen Kilgore, Ana VanderStreek, Quinn Canfield, Southeast Elementary, Ankeny
2nd Place - Gavin Johnson & Dorothy Paluch, Northeast Elementary, Ashland Ridge Ankeny
3rd Place - Izel Ramirez & Sydney Hammer, Prairie Trail Elementary, Ankeny*

Elementary School Technology Competition

*1st Place - Katie Day, Ankeny Northeast
2nd Place - Ranvi Rendla & Keren Cisneros, Rock Creek Ankeny
3rd Place - Ava Brown, Ankeny Northeast
Honorable Mention: Stella Addington, Ankeny Northeast*

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Grades K-5 (Elementary School) Winners
(continued)

Elementary School Visual Arts Competition

1st Place – Shea Woolums, East Elementary, Ankeny

2nd Place – Saylah Attig, Southeast Polk/Home Education

*3rd Place – Jayden Allison-Martinez/Joel Rodriguez-Garcia/Moises Cruz-Deras,
Howe Elementary, Des Moines*

Elementary School Teacher Participation Award

Erin Bouda, Ankeny Community School District

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Grades 6-8 (Middle School) Winners

Middle School Essay Competition

1st Place - Rishi Ingle, Waukee South Middle School

2nd Place - Thomas Dunne, Prairie Ridge, Ankeny

3rd Place - Sophia Morris, Southeast Polk

Honorable Mention – Srihari Kumaresan, Johnston Middle School

Middle School Poetry Competition

1st Place - Madhav Ganesh Kumar, Johnston, Summit

2nd Place - Lily Jones, Southview, Ankeny

3rd Place - Avery Steger, Waukee South Middle School

Middle School Performing Arts Competition

*1st Place – Rowan Kellenberger, Ryker Syverson, Ethan Larson,
Prairie Ridge, Ankeny*

Middle School Technology Competition

1st Place - Roberta Owasu-Anokye, Prairie Ridge, Ankeny

2nd Place - Charlie Villhauer, Ankeny, Northview

3rd Place - Noah Donahue, Home Educated, Des Moines

Honorable Mention – Lia Meyer, Prairie Ridge, Ankeny

Middle School Visual Arts Competition

1st Place – Blake Dreckman/Josie Rowlet/Rozycki/Nora Yarushkin, Waukee South Middle School

2nd Place – Owen Chapman & Anthony Emmanuel, Waukee South Middle School

3rd Place - Ainsely Schnurr, Prairie Ridge, Ankeny

Honorable Mention – Layla DeStiger, Waukee South Middle School

Middle School Teacher Participation Award

Karlee McKibban, Waukee Community School District

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Grades 9-12 (High School) Winners

High School Essay Competition

*1st Place - Keira Mueller, Northview, Ankeny
2nd Place - Elizabeth Deng, Ankeny Centennial
3rd Place - Paige Neighbors, Johnston Middle*

High School Poetry Competition

1st Place - Keira Mueller, Northview, Ankeny

High School Technology Competition

1st Place – Greta Lee, Ankeny, Northview

High School Visual Arts Competition

*1st Place - Riley Young, Lincoln High School, Des Moines
2nd Place - Sydney Heithoff, Ankeny Centennial
3rd Place - Adrienne Dobson-Greiner, Johnston Middle
Honorable Mention – Hansen Hollin, Ankeny Southview*

High School Teacher Participation Award

Kathryn Cooper, Ankeny Community School District

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In the U.S. you have to be at least 18 years old to vote, so how can a 10 year old influence an election? And why should a 10 year old care?

Let's start with the why. All these adults are making laws that impact us children. There are laws that govern what can go into a school lunch, how long recess is, and if there will be snow days or remote learning. One issue I'd like to discuss is currently in the legislative branches in Iowa. This is on the Iowa Area Education Agency. This is the thing that got me involved. This agency provides services to help both students and teachers in schools. The bill is trying to remove it from the Iowa education system.

So how can a child affect bills like these? Well, there are several ways to do that. The goal is for others to be able to see your side of the issue. This can be done by writing an email to an important figure. Another way is giving a speech. This is how I chose to involve myself. I got up in front of 70-80 people with my mom and we said how the bill on the AEA affects us. Stating examples of how I grew thanks to the AEA impacted the people in the room. We talked about how doctors said I would not walk or talk and the AEA helped us every "step" of the way. We talked about how I am now in AELP and have participated in NanoWrimo (and Law Day). We talked about our wonderful AEA audiologist, Peggy, and how she helped create presentations for my 4th and 5th-grade classes. How all of this would not be possible without the help of the AEA.

If you want to affect an election but don't want to speak out, then that's okay too! There are ways you can get others who agree with you to vote, such as making a poster, writing letters, or going from door to door reminding neighbors to vote. Even if we don't have the ability to vote, it is our job to improve the place we inhabit for us and generations to come. We are only given one world, so if you can find a way to use your voice to influence an election, I highly encourage you to do so.

By Brian Meurer
(Mrs. Bouda's class, 5th grade, NE Elementary)

Grade K-5 Essay
1st Place

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When something only happens every four years shouldn't we all spring at the opportunity to be a part of it? The United States presidential election happens every four years. It's a time for us to use our voices today, to actually make an impact in the future.

In a world where lots of people decide to pick fights with anyone they can over little issues as well as big ones, we know that people can have strong opinions and powerful voices. Election year is not just about picking a leader, it is more about sharing ideas, opinions, and having conversations with people that you agree or disagree with.

Voting shouldn't be something you're dreading doing every two and four years. Voting is a privilege- an honor and a right that you have by being an American. Thinking that one vote won't change the outcome is very counterfactual because if we all think that, then we will get nowhere. Vote for people who can't vote, don't vote, vote because you have the opportunity to be a part of something huge. Throwing away our strongest weapon by not taking advantage of it could lead to a downfall in our democracy, laws and daily life.

Many citizens face a conflict of not having access to a place to vote. Many of these people don't know what Absentee Voting is. Absentee Voting is where people can vote not in person but will fill out an Absentee ballot when their schedule allows it. However not all states have absentee voting, people will have to send in requests to get the ballot. States that don't have absentee voting (Which is very few) might have Vote-by-Mail which is where your state automatically sends ballots to registered voters. Lastly, the people who don't have full schedules can go into a polling station that could be at your library, community center, etc. No matter what your daily life looks like, there's a way to vote.

Throughout the years voter turnout has gone up and down. In 2020 only 66% of eligible Americans took their chance to vote. What's crazy is that this is the highest percentage of voters for the presidential election since 1900. Later the voter turnout for the 2022 midterm elections was a shocking 46%, that's less than half of everyone who could have voted. 2024 is a great year to break some records. Let's get up and vote. No choice is bad when it's your opinion. So, will we be saving you a seat at this year's 2024 elections?

Cecilia Brugman
Fifth Grade
Heritage Elementary

Grade K-5 Essay
2nd Place

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We are All Equal

by Ryne Thomason
Meadow View Elementary

Imagine living in a world where your voice does not matter just because of the color of your skin or your gender.

That is the world some people lived in before the Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendments. The Fifteenth Amendment would allow people of color to vote but with a catch. Because of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments, slave states had more representation in congress, but that didn't give them all the rights of white men, they still couldn't vote. The Democrat controlled South had more house seats because of the Three-Fifths Compromise. For this one reason, the Republican controlled South proposed the Fifteenth Amendment. Then, in 1869, both the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate approved the Fifteenth Amendment. It was officially ratified in 1870 and said:

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of race color or previous condition of servitude."

While it did allow colored men the right to vote, it did not stop literacy tests and poll taxes, which meant that unless they learned to read (which they were not taught) colored men could not vote.

The Nineteenth Amendment allowed women to vote. Back then, people thought women voting would undermine society. But, in 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Lucretia Mott organized factions across the country, inspiring meetings and beginning the fight for the right to vote. After the Civil War, the Fifteenth Amendment allowed colored Americans to vote (if they were boys). Stanton and Susan B. Anthony opposed the Fifteenth Amendment because it did not include women and formed the National Woman's Suffrage Association. Lucy One and Henry Blackwell, abolitionists who supported the Fifteenth Amendment created the American Suffrage Association. Soon, Susan B. Anthony proposed a bill to Congress but was defeated on the Senate floor in 1887. Then in 1890, the two suffrage movements combined and became known as the National American Suffrage Association. Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Colorado granted permission to vote. Around the same time, the Association of Colored Women was formed. From 1910-1918 more states gave permission, but it wasn't always smooth sailing. Women fighting for the right to vote faced the danger of being hurt or arrested. But in 1918, President Wilson gave his support to the suffrage movement and said their votes would make the country safe for democracy. Finally, In 1919 the Federal Women's Suffrage Amendment, the same one written by Susan B. Anthony, was accepted. In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment was incorporated with the United States Constitution, though it would take another 4 years for Native American men and women to vote and over 30 years before Asian Americans could vote. The Fifteenth and Nineteenth Amendment were both critical events for people's lives.

Whether we have a different color of skin or have a different gender, we are all equal.

Grade K-5 Essay
3rd Place

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Voices of Democracy

By: Henry Burnley

One of the Presidents I admire most, Theodore Roosevelt, once said, "The government is us; we are the government, you and I." In my opinion, I think that voices of democracy means that everyone has an equal and fair say.

I believe that having a voice in democracy is important because if everyone has a say, then the elections are fair. There are some countries without democracy, and because of that, the leaders get to decide everything about the citizens' lives. This leads the people to feel hopeless and lacking control. During Colonial times, the American Colonists did not have a say on what King George III decided, eventually leading to the American Revolution. That is why the United States is a democracy, not a monarchy.

In the United States, there are many ways to express your voice as an adult. Some of these include voting for President, a Representative, or a Senator. People can also peacefully protest. But as kids, there are also many opportunities to have a voice in decisions. In school, I ran for a position on Student Council so I could change things about the school. I have also taken online classes from a federal judge to learn more about democracy and the electoral process. This year, I attended the Iowa caucus and learned about how the process works.

Clearly, having a voice in democracy is very important. In the US, we are very fortunate to be able to express our opinions freely and to have input in government decisions. I think that having a voice in democracy means that everyone has an equal say, and I am thankful to live in the USA.

Grade K-5 Essay
Honorable Mention

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Two Voices
By Adelyn Lupkes

Read the poem line by line, top to bottom. Then, read the poem line by line, bottom to top. You should hear two opposing voices.

All voices should be heard
I don't think
We should be controlled by others
Let people know
That everyone is independent
It is silly to say
Not everybody's voice should be heard
Doesn't matter
What they have to say
Listen

Alida Jones and Madeline Nail
Grade K-5 Poetry
1st Place

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V-ote who you think!
O-pinion. You have one so use it!
I- I think _____. So I will vote _____!
C-are about who you vote for!
E-lect who you want to vote for!

By Moriah Mueller
Westwood Elementary
4th Grade

Grade K-5 Poetry
2nd Place

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Everyone needs a vote
Respect what others quote

Make sure your not under age
So lock your little ones in a cage

Make sure its your own decision
And make your vote your honest opinion

Stand up for your right to vote
Educate yourself with others quotes

The future is ours and it is bright
But it's gonna be a long journey so hold on tight

Grade K-5 Poetry
3rd Place

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Empowering Democracy

By: Rishi Ingle

The foundation of the United States is democracy. Voting is one of the biggest parts of democracy; it is a privilege, right, and duty to vote. Why should you vote, why did 2020 have the highest voter turnout in a century, and how can congressional voting help bipartisan support?

Why should you turn out to vote? Voting shows civic duty, representation, and influence. Voting is an opportunity for citizens to actively shape their communities, states, and country. Voting is a civic responsibility that ensures that all policies are in line with the needs and desires of citizens. Secondly, when many people turn out it ensures that different voices are heard. Elected representatives make decisions that affect individuals greatly, these include things from education, healthcare, to the economy. Voting empowers us to choose the leaders that have critical impacts on our lives and makes your voice heard.

An example for a high turnout election was the 2020 election, it had approximately 66.7% of the voting-eligible population participate in voting. This was one of the highest turnouts for a presidential election in the past century. The high turnout could correlate to the high stakes of the presidential election, expanded access to voting, and demographic shifts. The 2020 election had two completely different candidates, and voters felt that the election would have intense effects on the country's decisions on immigration, racial justice, the economy, and mainly the handling of Covid-19. States introduced new ways to expand voting including early voting, voting through mail, and same day registration. According to Pew-Research, demographic changes show that younger voters are more engaged with the elections with around 50% of people ages 18-29 casted a ballot, an 11 percent increase from 2016. The high stakes of the presidential election, expanded access to voting, and demographic shifts lead to the high turnouts of the 2020 election.

Congress is in a gridlock. Congress members are not agreeing with each other because they are more focused on their party. Instead of voting down party lines, it would be more effective to vote for legislation that would help constituents. If congress doesn't do this it will lead to a government shutdown, leaving millions of workers unpaid, causing detrimental consequences. How does this relate to voting? Citizens should take the high turnouts from the presidential election and transfer it to congressional elections and hold senators and representatives accountable for their actions in congress. If congressional elections have high turnouts it can help congress escape its gridlock.

In conclusion, voting is an important part of democracy. The reasons why you should vote, why the 2020 elections had such a high turn out, and how voting can stop congress from staying in a gridlock are all very important. Even though many eligible voters believe one vote is not going to change anything, it can actually make a significant impact. Voting is a foundation of democracy, it's a right, privilege, duty, and most importantly a way to express yourself.

Grade 6-8 Essay
1st Place

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Voices of Democracy
You Gotta Fight For Your Rights

In the shaping of our country throughout the years, we have had to make many changes, add amendments, and alter laws to make it better. Our country is like an orchestra; like making good music, it takes many different people. But every symphony has solos that draw attention to different parts. And sometimes, like an orchestra, our country must have solos to strengthen it. Here are some of our most affecting soloists throughout our history:

Martin Luther King Jr. was a monumental leader for the civil rights movement and the NAACP(National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). He organized sit-ins, gave speeches, and is most famous for his 'I Have a Dream' speech and the March on Washington. This speech and march were monumental in gaining attention for the rights movement, and without it, it might have taken longer to get the rights wanted. King shared the dream of many. He envisions a world where people are people, without discriminating or withholding rights, and through his and his supporters' activism for causes, they will achieve their goals and become voices of democracy. He gave a voice for those who did not have one.

Susan B. Anthony was an influential player in advocating for women's rights for most of the 18th century, especially the right to vote. She worked tirelessly for fifty years on women's rights. Though she did not live to see women being given the right to vote, she was a pioneer in advocating for that right already awarded to their counterparts. She also, through her advocacy that led to the 19th amendment, paved the way for other influential women to be voices of democracy and change our country.

Eleanor Roosevelt was an important advocate for workers' rights, globally and nationally, and was regarded as 'The First Lady of the World.' She started most of her activism as First Lady, and was a big factor in helping working class Americans. She had many influential achievements, such as helping make the Fair Labor Standards Act. This established working conditions like banning child labor and creating the 40-hour work week that we have today. She chaired the UN's Commission on Human Rights. Through this and more, she helped thousands, if not millions, of people to create better lives everywhere. \]She worked tirelessly over the years, even after her term as First Lady had ended, positively impacting the world. Because of this Eleanor Roosevelt is one of these people that have this similarity: They saw an issue thrust upon them and they sought justice.

Overall, these individuals have helped our orchestra of a country by their various solos and influenced our country and people greatly with their ideas. They have caused or changed some of our laws and amendments. These people have created fantastic music, and are people who have this similarity: They saw an issue thrust upon them and they sought justice. These people are true *voices of democracy*.

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Voices of Democracy
Sophia Morris 7th grade

Many Americans each year take time out of their day to vote for America's next leaders like the president, or government officials, but voting wasn't always like this. In today's world, you have to be a citizen of the U.S.A. and over the age of 18 to vote. Throughout history, the number of people that could vote was very limited. This left people of color, non-English speakers, women, and young adults between the ages of 18 and 21 not being able to vote. Now, many people of all backgrounds have the right to vote. So today, I'm going to give you a few reasons why you should vote, why democracy is important, and why voting should be encouraged.

Why should you vote? According to [nationalgeographic.org](https://www.nationalgeographic.org), "A Portland State University study found that fewer than 15 percent of eligible voters were turning out to vote for mayors, council members, and other local offices. Low turnout means that important local issues are determined by a limited group of voters, making a single vote even more statistically meaningful." On a local level, just one vote can make a drastic difference.

Why is a democracy important? People getting to vote provides the opportunity to choose the outcome of their community. Democracy's has been around since the ancient Athens civilization. Without everyone agreeing or getting a say in the next leader, people would rebel in order to get what they wanted, and the civilization would turn into an anarchy with no leaders or rules. Democracy gives citizens the chance to have a say in how their town, state, or country is ruled, so they are more likely to agree, leading to less conflict over bills and laws or who is the next leader.

How can we encourage others in our community to vote? Even if you are not eligible to vote, you can still try to get others to vote. One way is by volunteering. You can work on candidate campaigns by spreading word door-to-door, by making post cards, or by volunteering at campaign headquarters. You can also learn about political topics, talk about where you stand with your community, and use your voice on social media platforms.

These are all of my reasons why you should vote, how we can encourage others in our community to vote, and why democracy is important. Remember that every vote matters. If you join others in voting, it can make a difference. Find where you stand politically and what you are passionate about and try to get others to vote.

Cited Sources

[nationalgeographic.org](https://www.nationalgeographic.org)
www.usaid.gov/democracy
[Independentvoterproject.org](https://www.independentvoterproject.org)

Grade 6-8 Essay
3rd Place

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Voices of Democracy: America as a Patchwork Quilt

The United States of America, and the whole of its democracy, is just an old patchwork quilt. Through the blood, sweat, and tears of every American that's come before us, we've developed a gift that serves us when we need it most. Our democracy gives the people of the US an opportunity to use their previously muffled voices to stitch up humanity's wounds and move the country forward on their own. Each citizen can expand the quilt and grow our nation's democracy by voting, being a single strand in an old patchwork quilt.

Officially established by the Founding Fathers in 1776, the US is a country built off of freedom. Freedom. That's all the Patriots ever wanted. That's what drove ordinary US citizens to fight back against well-trained Redcoats. That's the idea that led them to victory. The US' successful rebellion against British rule was the result of desperate rebels rejecting immoral British rules and policies. Under a tyrannical monarchy, citizens didn't get a say in how laws were passed and implemented. The US strived for a greater, freer government, in which its citizens could run their own country. Thus, in 1787, years after the US gained independence from Britain in the American Revolution, Congress adopted a new Constitution that put forth the principles of democracy by allowing citizens to elect members of the House of Representatives. This basic right to vote has only expanded ever since.

After establishing a democracy, the Founding Fathers created the Electoral College to compromise between Congress's vote and the popular vote of US citizens. In this process, each state is allocated a number of electoral votes equal to the combined total of Senators and Representatives the state has in Congress. Every state, besides Maine and Nebraska, appoints electors to fill these votes based on the state-wide popular vote. Our votes for president actually count as votes for our candidate's preferred electors, with a total of 270 electoral votes needed to elect a president. Admittedly, for a process so old and unchanged, the Electoral College has some issues. Perhaps most notably, the unequal voting power across different states, the winner-takes-all method of deciding which candidate gets what electoral votes of a certain state, and the reinforcement of a two-party system. These flaws can result in candidates winning the presidency without receiving a majority of the popular vote. However, since the Electoral College remains an effective voting process, ensuring free and fair elections.

The US is not perfect. Every day, there is crime, poverty, discrimination, gun violence, just to name a few prominent issues. These are the tattered, frail edges of our patchwork quilt, the loosened, dilapidated seams holding everything together. The last thing we want is for it to come unstitched. We the people have the power, the opportunity, to be an impactful voice in our country, to stitch up our bleeding wounds. By voting, we can move forward as a society, and as a nation.

Srihari Kumaresan
Grade 6-8 Essay
Honorable Mention

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Requiem for the Two Party System

The Worm of Corruption

Politics decide many things.
Almost everything.
It settles laws with either obvious or murky
reasoning.

Murky is mysterious.
Treachurous.
Dark.
Unknown.

Murky water is full of
Waste and sewage.
This water becomes foul and fetid.
And fetid water often hides terrible secrets.

The goal:
To be
the one and only
President of the United States
What will you do to fly past your opponents
and win?
How do you influence everyone in your orbit?
What is the currency of that influence?
This tide of influence ebbs and flows.

Righteous and factual with proper judgments,
Or opinions potentially unethical, biased, or
cruel.
Opinions that gain support for virtually
everything.

The fair system is what connects all of us
together.
Corruption worms a pathway into the fair
system -
By fraud, tampering with ballots, and other
unjust ways.
If murkiness occurs at a rapid rate,
The Worms of Corruption,
Will smother democracy,
And reign supreme.

We must purify the water and make it suitable
for everyone.

Halt the vices,

Who attack the system of fairness,
By enforcing rigorous and strict laws.

Politicians should righteously serve:
For the people,
Of the people,
And be elected
By the people.

The decaying free and fair system will grow
anew,
This time with stems that sprout new buds,
That are secure and liberated from
The snare of corruption's weeds and worms.

Schism's Stalemate

Donkeys and elephants are on the attack,
Voices of argument shooting each-others
backs.

The donkeys bray opinion's furious root,
While elephants trumpet resentment's dispute.

The wasps of politics swarm through the air,
Lies and truths blend in a heated affair.

Vile comments crawl through the room,
About war, firearms, drugs, and our doom.

Battles are fought; each won or lost,
Each party is destined to sprout or rot.

Accusations spat and roll off the tongue,
The audacious defense ready to prove wrong.

Charges and affidavits brought to bear,
Candidates disappear into thin air.
As the scream of the argument continues
without halting,
The culminating event needs some serious
stopping.

Arguments are suspended and grudges kept,
As the deafening silence of the area rests.

Long-standing bitterness continues to bloom -
Donkeys and elephants battle again soon.

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So Stand
Poem by Lily Jones

Through generations, on and on, you will find
Some one
Someone who fought for their beliefs
Someone who waged war
Someone who died for their cause
But, the ones that truly stick out, are the ones
who stood up

They stood and Spoke
That takes the most courage of all
Their words echo through the ears of
the Public.
"You must do the thing you think you
cannot do"
And when you do, you can change the
world
You can change minds, beliefs, and motives
with only one word

So Speak
Speak with a confidence that only comes from
faith
Stand with a determination that only comes from
loss

One word can make the difference
"Do what you feel in your heart to be right -
for you'll be criticized anyway"
So stand up because there will always be
Someone to oppose you
That is how this world works
That is how it will always work
So Stand
and stand Proud
Because you can make a difference

The Polk County Bar Association Law Day Committee
presents
Polk County Bar Association 2024 Law Day Competition

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A Harmonious Orchestra of Voices: Big and Small

The human voice is an instrument. It expresses thoughts and feelings, shares opinions, and interacts with others. When voices combine in harmony, their message is akin to a mellifluous symphony. However, voices don't always align. Sometimes discordance turns the orchestration into dissonance. This difference is normal; even a chaotic piece has a method in its madness. The most important thing to remember throughout this ensemble called 'Life' is that every instrument, from the cymbals to the great bass drums to a singular clarinet, is valuable and deserves to be heard.

Often, the main voices we hear in life are the big ones. Just like trumpets and trombones, these voices clamor for attention, shrieking their opinions and drowning out the sounds of the lower musical apparatuses. Presidents, the government, celebrities, CEOs, etc. The more money and fame they have, the louder and brassier their opinions. They matter, and sometimes provoke necessary changes with their power. On the other hand, they spout wild and extreme positions that do not align with the middle class, but because of their might, everyone listens, akin to a gigantic tuba.

The American middle class resembles the bulk of the orchestra. The wind section, brass section, and string section are sometimes overlaid by the bolder and blaring voices of the other instruments but are essential for the harmony and melodic quality of the piece. Without them, there is no music. The same is true for American citizens. They make up the backbone of the country, but their opinions, values, and beliefs are often overshadowed by politicians and celebrities screaming at the top of their lungs. Our country was built by the people, for the people, and we should remember how our Founding Fathers designed the song of America to flow.

Few have heard of the glass armonica, alto flute, harp, sarrusophone, or theremin in classical music, just as few consider the perspectives or best interests of children. These instruments are not often heard for a reason, as children are not politicians and lawmakers due to their developing brains. Regardless, because they are not always heard does not imply that they have no voice. It means that sometimes they need others who will take the time to slow down and listen to them. Composers remember these instruments like adults should protect children and act with their best interests in mind, for even the smallest voices matter.

These voices make America diverse and awe-inspiring, and together they create the most limitless and wonderful composition known to mankind. The voices ebb and flow, rising and falling, each with their own chance in the spotlight while riding on the backs of others. Together, they will combine to form music, but like an orchestra, that music will not be spectacular unless all the voices of the instruments can be heard in harmony.

Grade 9-12 Essay
1st Place

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We the People. These three words have defined the core principles of the US: democracy, equality, and the ultimate power of the people's voices. Yet throughout history, who "the people" are has varied. For the framers of the Constitution, it meant those similar to them: wealthy, educated white men, often slaveowners. The definition of "the people" has evolved since then, in no small part due to the perseverance of activists across centuries of protest. In this continuing struggle for equality, marginalized voices have often been drowned out by the status quo; still, the calls of the people persist, pushing our country forward despite the challenges.

Perhaps one of the most egregious examples of institutions disregarding the voices of the people they are meant to serve is the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision over slavery. In the 1850s, while abolitionists like Frederick Douglass lambasted slavery through public speeches and essays, government institutions only seemed intent on protecting it rather than the people. The infamous *Dred Scott v. Sandford* case exemplifies this paradox: in 1857, the Supreme Court not only declared that enslaved people were property but also revoked the citizenship of any of their descendants, targeting African Americans. With this declaration, the Supreme Court diminished the rights of African Americans to speak out in the nation. To Chief Justice Roger Taney, "the people" were limited to white Americans; only their voices were accounted for and protected by his Court. Though slavery was eventually abolished through the Civil War and the 13th Amendment, the *Dred Scott* decision remains a disheartening example of US institutions attempting to silence the voices of the people they should have served.

Nonetheless, the persistence of marginalized voices has succeeded in making progress for our institutions, as can be seen through the 19th Amendment. The suffrage movement started long before the amendment was ratified in 1920; since the 1800s, women in the United States had been organizing and protesting for their right to vote and participate in government. The 1848 Seneca Falls Convention famously issued the Declaration of Sentiments that called for women's suffrage, spearheaded by activists like Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Their struggle would continue for seventy years, frequently facing derision from those who believed women did not need to vote. But through their activism, Congress passed the 19th Amendment in 1919, completing the first half of the ratification process; the nation followed suit in 1920, achieving the three-fourths ratification needed to grant women's suffrage.

Both cases are just a few instances among many within US history where marginalized voices and people challenged the status quo. Though our institutions may drown out the people at times and fail to uphold their ideals, like with the *Dred Scott* decision, ultimately, the continued persistence of our voices in society can and will break through, as with the 13th and 19th Amendments. What matters most are the actions that we, the people, choose to pursue, and our continued presence and courage to make our voices heard.

Elizabeth Deng
Grade 9-12 Essay
2nd Place

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Paige Neighbors
Voices of Democracy

This is not your average essay. In your average essay, you do not decide the end. Your voice goes unheard. Your average essay is already written. This essay's future, like America, is up to you. Choose any of the three paragraphs to start with, and read them in any order. They are all intertwined.

The voice of the people

The famous first words of the constitution are "We the People", effectively saying that the founding fathers, the first leaders of our nation, were people just like us, people who didn't agree with the way their government was treating them. So they did something. In doing so they created a country for us, the posterity, set up so the most important voice is that of the people. A government "for the people, by the people". People elect their fellow citizens into office as legislators. That means the people are making decisions themselves and voting gives citizens over 18 the voice to choose their elected officials who make decisions for them. The people also have the voice to protest and outwardly disagree with the choices their government is making through the First Amendment. The power of this country has always been for the people. That is one of the founding principles of our country.

The voice of our legislators

The power to make, alter, and repeal laws and to make legislative policy. Legislators make and pass the bills that become the laws of our country. The legislators are the voice of the people in the government; they are voted for based on their convictions and how well they represent the majority of their constituents. Their voices are heard to lead change. The legislators, and our government, are made up of the people. Anyone can run for office if they meet that position's requirements. The legislators in office must listen to all their constituents regardless of whether they can vote, thus giving a voice in government to future young Americans.

The voice of our future

The kids and teens in this competition and all across the country are the future of our democracy. They may not have the full voice of an American citizen, being unable to vote, but they still have the right to contact their representatives, educate themselves on their government, and protest when they believe something is unfair. Just like their older counterparts. They still have a voice in what happens to this country. They are the future, they will become voters and legislators, they are who this country should be run for.

Our country was built by people who felt their government was not listening to their voices. That's why our government is structured as a democracy in which the most important voice is that of its people. A voice holds all the power you need to change this country.

Grade 9-12 Essay
3rd Place

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Voices Die in Darkness:
In every event in history
A story has been repressed
A side untold
And a perspective unknown

Voices have been silenced
Stamped down
Snuffed out
Mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters
Have died
Speaking up

Throughout conflict
Throughout violence
Throughout war
We will not be silenced

We will always speak up
Lift our voices in a shout
To stand up for what is right
We will **never** be silent...

Everyone has a voice
Everyone has an opinion
Everyone has a perspective
Everyone has hopes and dreams
And everyone deserves to be heard.

And so I urge you today
Set aside your differences
Welcome each other into open arms
Love your neighbors
And most importantly
Never silence a voice
Because voices die in darkness

Keira Mueller
Grade 9-12 Poetry
1st Place