

NFWL-NRA 2011 Bill of Rights National Essay Contest

ESSAY TOPIC: The Impact of the First Amendment on Women Leaders and Social Media

This year, the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) and the National Rifle Association (NRA) are sponsoring the 14th annual nationwide Bill of Rights Essay Contest. The focus this year will be on the rise of social media and what it means for the future of democracy and the interaction between citizens and both women candidates and elected women leaders. The deadline for submission is **Friday, June 3, 2011** after which an NFWL/NRA joint committee will judge each essay and the seven award recipients will be chosen.

If you are a female High School junior or senior, class of 2011 or 2012, you are eligible to participate. The seven contest winners will receive: (1) a \$3,000 unrestricted scholarship to use towards college tuition at any U.S. college or university; and (2) an all-expense-paid trip to NFWL's 2011 Annual Conference, taking place August 11-15 at The Marriott Downtown Des Moines, Iowa. Here you will meet women lawmakers from across the United States, learn about public policy, and establish relationships that often grow into mentoring opportunities.

The mission of The National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) is to provide strategic resources to women leaders for leadership development and effective governance through conferences, seminars, education materials, and networking opportunities at both the state and federal levels. NFWL is a non-partisan 501c-3, educational foundation. Its membership consists of members of the National Order of Women Legislators (all current and former women elected officials) corporate leadership and association members.

The National Rifle Association, established in 1871, is a grassroots membership organization with more than four million members committed to defending our freedoms as they are enumerated in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The Second Amendment states, "The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." The NRA is proud to sponsor this annual essay contest with NFWL in order to enable young women committed to defending the Bill of Rights to attend college and advance women in leadership.

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This year's essay topic is "The Impact of the First Amendment on Women Leaders and Social Media".

Write a 400- to 600-word essay on the rise of social media and what it means for the future of democracy and the interaction between citizens and both women candidates and elected women leaders.

Begin by considering such social media as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogging, and mass political text messaging. Consider how these forms of social media create an interconnected body politic - and a direct communication channel between citizens and leaders.

The Scholarship Committee will weigh five specific elements in submissions: In addition to the basics of spelling, punctuation, and writing style, the judges will be judging your essay for (1) Addressing what has been gained and what has been lost with social media in this type of environment, for example privacy and etiquette limits of social media. (2) Understanding the Bill of Rights including the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, (3) Understanding social media in the political arena in our time, (4) the analysis, insight, and imagination about the role of social media in the political arena recently and in the future, and (5) the inspirational quality and storytelling.

Requirements:

Complete applications should include:

1. Two (2) copies of your essay;
2. Essay Contest Verification Form;
3. Two (2) personal reference letters;
4. The name of applicant's sponsoring female state legislator*;

**All applicants must be sponsored by a woman state legislator for this contest. To find a woman legislator in your state, visit your state's legislative website. The sponsoring legislator does not have to be from the applicant's district, but she does have to be from the applicants's state. Any applicants experiencing trouble locating a woman legislator in their state should contact the NFWL office for assistance.*

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IMPORTANT: In advance of the June 3rd deadline applicants must send in a completed *Essay Contest Verification Form* to NFWL by fax or mail. This form should be sent in prior to the submission of your entire application so NFWL can communicate with the applicant and sponsoring legislator regarding any changes with the essay contest or Annual Conference arrangements before the deadline.

Eligibility: To be eligible for this year's essay contest, applicants must be college-bound female high school juniors or seniors – Class of 2011 or Class of 2012. All applicants are required to secure a state legislator as a sponsor. The seven contest winners and their sponsoring legislators also must be able to attend the *entire* NFWL Annual Conference where students will be presented with the award. The Conference will take place August 11-15, 2011 at The Marriott Downtown Des Moines, Iowa. All travel and lodging expenses for the Annual Conference will be covered by the National Foundation for Women Legislators for the both winner and her sponsoring legislator.

Deadline for Essay Submission: Your essay must arrive or be postmarked to the NFWL office no later than Friday, June 3, 2011. Essays received after this date may not be considered for the contest.

Essay Submissions and Contact Information.

Send your completed essay application to:

National Foundation for Women Legislators, Inc.
ATTN: NFWL / NRA Bill of Rights Essay Contest
910 16th Street, NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20006

Questions may be directed to the NFWL office at 202-293-3040, ext. 1005

Fax: 202-293-5430 | E-mail: events@womenlegislators.org

You may also visit our website, www.womenlegislators.org, to view scholarship FAQs.

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NFWL-NRA Bill of Rights Essay Contest Verification Form

In advance of the June 3rd deadline applicants must send in a completed *Essay Contest Verification Form* to NFWL by fax, mail, or email. Fax: 202-293-5430 | E-mail: scholarships@womenlegislators.org

Applicant Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Birth Date: ___/___/___ High School Graduation Date: _____

High School: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

College(s) planning or desiring to attend in Fall 2010 or 2011: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Sponsoring Legislator Name: _____

Office Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Applicant Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date



General Questions

- Q: I can't find the verification form, can you send me one?

A: The verification form is a part of the complete application (PDF). If you have problems downloading it, please email the Scholarship Committee at events@womenlegislators.org to receive a copy by e-mail or postal mail.

- Q: Am I supposed to fax or mail the verification form before I send in the application?

A: Yes. You must send your Verification Form in by fax or postal mail PRIOR to submitting your full application. This allows for the Committee to have a record of your interest and to follow up with you closer to the scholarship deadline date. If you are submitting your essay very close to the deadline, just include the Verification Form with your completed application.

- Q: I can't access the Scholarship from the website / I can't find the application

A: If you have problems downloading the application (PDF), please email the Scholarship Committee at events@womenlegislators.org to receive a copy by e-mail or postal mail.

- Q: How do I know my application is complete?

A: Your application will be considered complete as long as you send the following:

1. your essay
2. two (2) letters of recommendation
3. verification form with
 - a. The name of your sponsoring woman legislator
 - b. Your mailing address
 - c. The fastest way to notify you if you win - at least one (preferably all three): an email address, a telephone number, and a fax number.

The Scholarship Committee recommends sending each item of your application at once rather than sending your essay and letters of recommendation under separate cover.

- Q: How many students enter the contest each year?

A: Last year, over 500 students entered the contest. We expect similar interest this year. Entries come from all 50 states.



Securing a Sponsoring Legislator

- Q: Does my sponsoring legislator have to be a woman?

A: Yes. While NFWL does include male legislators in its events, for this special scholarship contest, the sponsor must be a woman.

- Q: I can't find a sponsoring legislator, can you help?

A: Before calling the NFWL office, please follow these steps to find a woman legislator in your state. Locate the names of women legislators from your area by searching online (example: www.state.fl.us for Florida) or by calling your state capitol building. Note: Once you have chosen a legislator, it is important to call and speak with someone in that legislator's office rather than simply sending an email because legislators receive many, many emails. Explain to the legislator's assistant that you are interested in applying for the NFWL-NRA Bill of Rights scholarship and that you need a legislator to sponsor you. If the legislator agrees to sponsor you, she must provide her contact information, which you then insert in the Verification form. The legislator must agree to come with you to the entire Annual Conference which will be held August 11th – 15th in Des Moines, Iowa. She will present the scholarship to you at the Conference if you are chosen as a winner. There are no other requirements for the sponsoring legislator.

- Q: Can my sponsor be a city council member, mayor, US Senator, Congresswoman?

A: No. Your primary sponsor must be a woman state legislator - if you have a local or federal legislator already interested in sponsoring you, you must find a state co-sponsor.

- Q: Can one legislator sponsor more than one girl?

A: Yes. A legislator can sponsor as many students as want to enter from her district.

- Q: Does my sponsor have to be a current legislator?

A: Yes.

About the Essay

- Q: Will I "lose points" if I do/don't write about an example you list?

A: No. We will be looking for four specific elements in submissions: 1) story-telling ability, especially expressive and dramatic stories, 2) inspiration your essay creates in its audience, 3) a clear understanding of the Bill of Rights, and 4)

original insight, particularly in the way you choose to apply your essay topic to the Bill of Rights.

NFWL Annual Conference and Travel

- Q: If I am chosen to receive a scholarship, is my trip to the Conference paid for?

A: Yes, but you must agree to attend the entire conference which will be held August 11th – 15th in Des Moines, IA. You will share a room with another contestant unless your parents or family members choose to join you.

- Q: If I am chosen to receive a scholarship, is my sponsor's trip to the Conference paid for?

A: Yes, but your woman state legislator sponsor must agree to attend the entire conference which will be held August 11th – 15th in Des Moines, IA.

- Q: Are my parents able to attend the Annual Conference if I win?

A: Yes, but they must pay their own way. They will be responsible for their airfare and half of the hotel room, which they will share with you.

- Q: My sponsor cannot attend the Annual Conference. Can she still sponsor me?

A: No. The one obligation your sponsor has is to attend to the Annual Conference. If she already knows that she absolutely cannot attend, you should find another sponsor.

Eligibility

- Q: Am I eligible?

A: To be eligible for this year's essay contest, applicants must be college-bound female high school juniors or seniors - from either the Class of 2011 or the Class of 2012.

- Q: I am not a US Citizen. Am I still eligible?

A: As long as you are attending college in the US and you and your legislative sponsor can attend the Annual Conference which will be held in August you are eligible.

Letters of Recommendation

- Q: Who should I ask to write my letters of recommendation?

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A: Ask someone who knows you well. When deciding on whom to ask for a letter of recommendation, think of people in your life who are most familiar with you and your achievements. Consider asking a teacher, coach, school counselor, employer, or adult family friend.

If you have a question that is not listed here, please check the other FAQs. If you cannot find an answer, please e-mail NFWL at events@womenlegislators.org.