



Federal Court Civics Essay Contest

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee, Knoxville and Greeneville Divisions, in partnership with the Knoxville and Greeneville Chapters of the Federal Bar Association, is sponsoring a local civics essay contest. Each year, the national Federal Bar Association (FBA) sponsors a civics essay contest, which is open to middle and high school students nationwide and, for 2023, provides five cash awards totaling \$3,500. The Knoxville and Greeneville divisions of the federal court and local chapters of the FBA want to encourage local students to participate in the national contest and are offering cash awards for **high school students** who submit entries to the court's local contest.

The local contest is open to public, private, and home high school students from Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Carter, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, Sullivan, Unicoi, Union, and Washington Counties. The topic for the national and local contests is the same, as detailed below: *“Should race be a factor in college admissions?”*

To enter the **local** contest, students must write an essay for submission that complies with the criteria and rules for the national contest (described in detail in the attached document). **Essay entries for the local contest must be submitted as either a Microsoft Word document or a PDF file, compliant with the national contest rules (see attached), and must be accompanied by the attached local submission form for receipt by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on March 17, 2023, at the local contest email address, KXGVcivicsessay@gmail.com. (Please note that the national contest deadline is February 9, 2023, by 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time; entries for the local and national contests *must be submitted separately*.)**

Prizes for the local contest will be awarded in at least the following amounts:

First Place: \$500
Second Place: \$250
Third Place: \$150

Winners of the local contest will be announced by May 1, 2023, and the winners, along with their parents and teachers/sponsors, will be invited to a celebration event with federal judges and members of the local chapters of the Federal Bar Association. The winners also will be announced in a court press release and recognized on the federal court's civics website and at meetings of the Knoxville and Greeneville chapters of the FBA.

Please spread the word and encourage your students to participate! If you have any questions, please contact KXGVcivicsessay@gmail.com.



Federal Bar Association

2023 ANNUAL CIVICS ESSAY CONTEST PROMPT

Should race be a factor in college admissions?

The Supreme Court is considering that question in two cases argued in October 2022. The cases are *Students for Fair Admissions v. Univ. of NC* and *Students for Fair Admission v. Harvard College*.

This is not the first time that this issue has come up in front of the Supreme Court. The two prior landmark cases – *Regents of Univ. of California v. Bakke**, 438 U.S. 265 (1978) and *Grutter v. Bollinger*** , 539 U.S. 306 (2003) – upheld affirmative action in college applications, but the opinion in *Grutter* seemed to indicate that it may not be upheld in the future.

What do you think?

- Are there race-neutral factors universities could consider in applications to ensure a diverse student body?
- Should characteristics such as socioeconomic background, first in the family to go to college, race, ethnicity, gender, or family legacy be weighed in admissions?
- Does the 14th Amendment’s “Equal Protection Clause” – which says that no state may “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” – allow affirmative action in higher education application deliberations?

College admissions programs that consider race as a factor in admissions are subject to the strict scrutiny standard. Some of the questions to consider in a strict scrutiny analysis of this case are 1) whether colleges have a compelling interest in a diverse student body and 2) whether considering other factors accomplish the same thing.

The FBA invites students to consider the question:

“Should applicants’ race continue to be a factor in evaluating college admissions applications?”
Your essay submission should:

1. state your proposed rule;
2. present your best arguments in support of the rule;
3. discuss how the strict scrutiny standard applies; and,
4. cite relevant sources, statutes, cases and/or historical events that support your position.

[CLICK HERE](#) for complete entry rules and instructions. The maximum essay length in the Middle School Division is 500 words, and the maximum length is 1,000 words for high school entries.

Historical Milestones:

1961 President John F. Kennedy's Executive Order (E.O.) 10925 used affirmative action for the first time.

1964 Civil Rights Act of 1964 signed into law.

1978 The U.S. Supreme Court in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 912 (1978) upheld the use of race as one factor in choosing among qualified applicants for admission.

1995 The Regents of the University of California voted to end University of California affirmative action programs.

1996 In *Texas v. Hopwood*, 518 U.S. 1033 (1996), the Fifth Circuit ruled that a University of Texas policy of considering race in the admissions process was a violation of the Constitution's equal-protection guarantee.

1998 Ban on use of affirmative action in admissions at the University of California went into effect resulting in a 61% drop in Berkeley admissions of African-American, Latino, and Native American students.

2002 In *Grutter v. Bollinger*, the Sixth Circuit upheld as constitutional the use of race as one of many factors in making admissions decisions at the University of Michigan's Law School.

2003 The Supreme Court upheld *Grutter v. Bollinger* because the program furthered a compelling interest in obtaining "an educational benefit that flows from student body diversity" and provided for a "holistic" review of each applicant.

2003 In *Gratz v. Bollinger*, the Supreme Court rejected as unconstitutional the undergraduate admissions program at the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science and the Arts because points granted based on race and ethnicity did not provide for a review of each applicant's entire file.

* *Bakke* was a plurality opinion. SCOTUS chose to split the baby by find that the petitioner should be admitted but also finding that although racial "quotas" are unconstitutional, the school does have a compelling interest in a diverse student body and that race could be one of many factors considered in admissions. It is likely because the process used by the school in *Bakke* had reserved 16 of 100 admission slots only for minority race applicants, and it was not ranked against other the applicants in the general applicant category that this really was a "quota" based on race. However, it still allowed the schools to consider race. Justice Powell's opinion was used in subsequent cases like *Grutter* for the compelling interest argument of race in admissions.

**There was a plurality but also a majority in *Grutter* and the majority opinion was authored by Justice O'Connor upholding the factor of race as a holistic. The interesting part of the opinion is the following statement "The Court expects that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today." Perhaps that is why SCOTUS granted cert to the *Students for Fair Admissions* case to revisit the necessity of continuing it?



Federal Bar Association

ENTRY RULES FOR THE 2023 NATIONAL CIVICS ESSAY CONTEST

Who May Enter

The 2023 contest is open to high school (grades 9-12) and middle school (grades 6-8) students in public, private, parochial and charter schools and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status in the United States and its Territories.

Essay Rules

The maximum essay length is 1,000 words for high school entries and 500 words for middle school entries. While not required, proper use of endnote citations and bibliographies will be credited during judging but are not included in the word count. Essays must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document (preferred) or PDF file and follow these formatting guidelines:

- Use 12 pt. Cambria or Times New Roman font, double-spaced text, with one-inch margins
- DO NOT include a title page, page headers or footers, or page numbers
- Include your name on the first page only
- Place all in-text, numbered citations at the end of your essay as endnotes, followed by a bibliography (if included)
- Name your file as follows: Firstname Lastname.ext (example: John Smith.doc; John Smith.pdf)

Essays must be submitted with a completed entry form, available at

<https://www.fedbar.org/about-us/outreach/civics-essay-contest/fba-essay-contest-entry-form/>.

The online entry form provides instructions for uploading documents. Entries accepted through 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time **February 9, 2023**. Winners will be notified no later than March 1.

Essays will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Understanding of constitutional principles – 40 points
- Clarity and effectiveness in expressing the theme – 30 points
- Grammar, spelling and composition – 25 points
- Use of footnotes, bibliographies – 5 points

Prizes

Scholarship prizes will be awarded for the following in *each* division:

- First place: \$1,500
- Second place: \$1,000
- Third place: \$500
- Honorable Mention (2): \$250

Publication Release

As a condition of entry acceptance, all publishing rights are retained by the Federal Bar Association and the association reserves the right to copyright material in its name and to reprint it in any FBA publication/media as it sees fit.

Copyright

Adherence to all U.S. copyright laws and fair use practices is required.

Disqualification

Reasons for disqualification include: incomplete or improperly formatted entries, off-topic essays, providing false information, committing plagiarism, not meeting the submission deadline, and not providing a release form if requested.

**2023 Eastern District of Tennessee – Federal Bar Association
Civics Essay Contest Knoxville & Greeneville Divisions
Entry Form**

ALL INFORMATION IS REQUIRED

Name of student: _____

Address of student: _____

Email address of student: _____

Phone number of student: _____

Name of parent/guardian of student: _____

Email address of parent/guardian: _____

Phone number of parent/guardian: _____

Name of high school attending: _____

Grade: _____

Name of sponsoring school/organization: _____

Address of sponsoring school/organization: _____

Email address of sponsoring adult: _____

Phone number of sponsoring adult _____

Please confirm ALL of the following by placing your initials in each blank:

_____ I followed applicable copyright laws and fair use practices.

_____ My essay is 1,000 words or less .

_____ I am a student enrolled in a public, private, parochial, charter, or home high school.

Please sign (electronic signature allowed): _____