

## **Story of America Essay Contest**

The goal of **Operation Protect & Defend’s Story of America** Essay Contest is to encourage critical thinking, active discussion and thoughtful writing about what it means to be a “good citizen” in America today. Americans enjoy a broad range of Constitutional rights that persons living in many other countries do not. These rights include freedom of speech and religion, a right to a fair trial, a right to due process and equal protection, to name a few. Along with these rights, we believe, come certain responsibilities, including the responsibility of each new generation of Americans to maintain and protect those rights in light of the circumstances and challenges facing their lives, their communities and their nation.

Teachers working with Operation Protect & Defend develop a curriculum addressing an important constitutional issue. The curriculum identifies court cases related to the issue being studied, and asks students to think about how that issue has played out in the past and how it is playing out in the present. This course of study includes selected readings provided by your teacher and court opinions. It also involves in-class discussion and in-class writing about questions raised by the readings.

All 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in classes participating in the Operation Protect and Defend program are invited to enter this essay contest. Students will compete for the following cash awards:

Justice Robert K. Puglia Most Original & Inspirational Essay Awards	\$1,000 each
Frank C. Damrell, Lawyers’ Choice Awards	\$1,000 each
Jean McEvoy Memorial Scholarship Award	\$1,000
Bion M. Gregory Essay Recognition Awards	\$500 each
Teacher’s Choice Awards	\$200 each

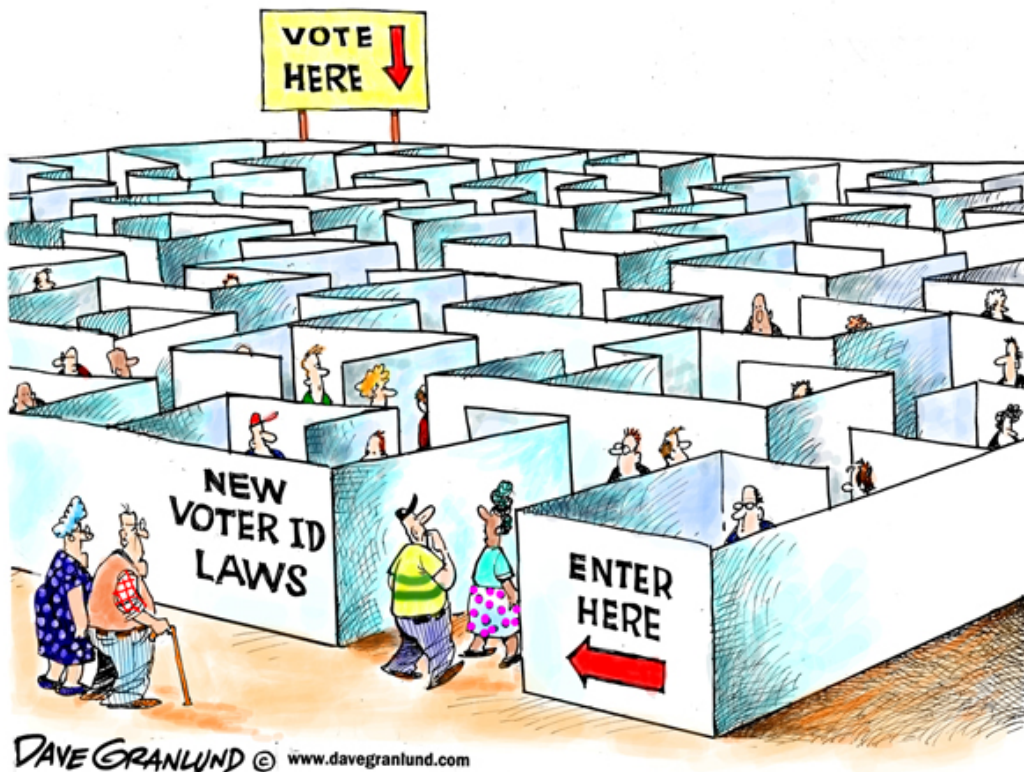
It is expected that the essays submitted for the competition will be based on the student’s own research and understanding and will be their own original work. It is not permissible for someone else to rewrite, change, or add text to a student’s essay. However, it is permissible for someone to note spelling, word usage, grammatical, punctuation, and formatting errors. Using the work of someone else – in whole or in part – is considered plagiarism and is not permitted. Students should be careful to identify and give credit to any portion of the submitted essay that comes from another source.

***Notification of Winners and Award Dinner:*** An awards ceremony and dinner will be held on May 1, 2019, at the Golden One Center, and winners will be notified in advance of the ceremony.

## **Story of America Essay Contest: Rules and Instructions**

1. The *Story of America* Essay Contest is open to all eligible 12<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in participating social science/government/economics/legal classes within the Sacramento City Unified School District, Twin Rivers Unified School District, San Juan Unified School District, Natomas Unified School District, Elk Grove Unified School District, Folsom Cordova Unified School District, and the Sacramento County Office of Education. Relatives of Operation Protect & Defend steering committee members are ineligible.
2. The essay must be based on the reading materials, in-class discussions, and in-class writings relating to the topic. The essay must be your original work.
3. Provide ONE copy of your essay. Your essay may be typewritten, word-processed, or neatly handwritten. It must be **double-spaced** using one side of 8-1/2 x 11” paper. Number the pages consecutively (1, 2, 3. . .). If you handwrite your essay in class, you are strongly encouraged to staple a typewritten or word-processed copy of the essay to your handwritten entry. However, any substantive differences between the handwritten in-class essay and the typewritten or word-processed duplicate may be grounds for disqualifying your essay from the contest. Illegible essays will not be considered.
4. The maximum number of words permitted is 2000. If typed, the type font must be 12 point or larger in a legible font (such as *Times New Roman*).
5. The completed Application Form must accompany the essay. Your name must NOT appear on the essay itself, only on the application form.
6. You must do your own work, during class as assigned and under the supervision of a teacher participating in the project. Your teacher must receive a copy of your essay and sign your application form. **Your essay must be turned into your teacher by March 5, 2019**, to ensure that you are entered in the Contest.
7. The *Story of America* program sponsors reserve the right to reprint entries. Essays will not be returned. If you want a copy of your essay for your own records, you must make a copy before submitting it.

## STORY OF AMERICA ESSAY PROMPT 2018



In 1866, in the wake of the Civil War, the U.S. Congress passed the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to ensure the rights of freedmen (emancipated slaves) across the country. The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1868, granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States—including former slaves—and guaranteed all citizens “equal protection of the laws.” The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment guaranteed the right to not be discriminated against based on race, a concern born of the knowledge that former Confederate States would look to disenfranchise African-Americans. Two years later, Congress found it necessary to supplement the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment with the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, calling out the right to vote as a specifically protected right in all of the states.

Following decades of challenges to voter suppression methods passed by state governments, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The law was sweeping in its impact, particularly through Sections 2, 4 and 5. Section 2 prohibited any kind of rules or procedures used to deny the right to vote based on race. Section 4 set criteria for which jurisdictions fell under the provision of the law, recognizing that not all jurisdictions discriminated against people of color regarding voting rights. Section 5 dictated that once a jurisdiction fit the established criteria under Section 4, the jurisdiction must receive permission from the federal government before it makes any changes to the voting requirements of the residents of that jurisdiction. In the last few years, the Supreme Court has been faced with new constitutional challenges to the rights of voters through the argued erosion of the Voting Rights Act via the impacts of redistricting.

The only way we can meet the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment challenges currently facing California and the nation is with a citizenry that understands and participates in all aspects of civic life. How does the Voting Rights Act of 1965 apply to voting in America today and why is it important for young voters to actively participate in our democratic society?

Explain your answer using what you learned in the curriculum. In particular, please give consideration to the cases of *Shelby County v. Holder*, *Veasey v. Abbott* (“*Veasey I*”), and *Luna v. County of Kern* in your response. You may support your answer with personal experiences if appropriate.



**OPERATION PROTECT AND DEFEND  
STORY OF AMERICA ESSAY CONTEST**

**APPLICATION FORM** (Must be completed and turned in with essay – please print clearly):

Entry # \_\_\_\_\_ (leave blank)                      Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT’S DECLARATION:**

*I declare that this essay is my original work and that it was written for my social science/government/economics class. I declare that have read and understood the requirements for submitting this essay for the Story of America essay contest. If I am chosen for an award, I give permission for my essay, and any photos taken of me at the awards event, to be reprinted and used for educational and promotional purposes related to Operation Protect & Defend.*

Student’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent’s/Guardian’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*I certify that my student completed this essay under my supervision.*

Teacher’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher’s Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Title of Essay: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Entries must be delivered to your participating teachers by March 5, 2019.**