



## VFW Kicks-Off Annual Essay Competition

**Mooresville Indiana. (August 25, 2023)** – Commander **Todd Gonterman** of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. Post **Sammy L. Davis Post 1111**, announced the kick-off of the VFW’s annual Patriot’s Pen youth essay competition. Middle school students in grades 6-8 in this area have the opportunity to compete and win thousands of dollars in national awards.

The VFW enacted the Patriot’s Pen competition in 1995 to encourage young minds to examine America’s history, along with their own experiences in modern American society by composing a 300- to 400-word patriotic-themed essay. The theme for the **2023-2024 school year** competition is, “**How are you inspired by America ?**”

Students begin by competing at the local Post level. Post winners advance to District competition with District winners advancing to the state competition. State first-place winners compete for their share of thousands of dollars in awards, and the national first-place winner is awarded \$5,000 and an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C.

Each year, more than 125,000 students participate nationwide. Deadline for student entries is October 31, and interested students and teachers should contact their local VFW Post **1111** for more information. Or call Tina Morgan the youth and scholarship chairperson at 317-996-3564 leave a message she will return your call. Thank you for your interest.

FOR DETAILS VISIT: <https://www.vfw.org/PatriotsPen>.

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**About the VFW:** The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. is the nation's largest and oldest major war veterans organization. Founded in 1899, the congressionally-chartered VFW is comprised entirely of eligible veterans and military service members from the active, Guard and Reserve forces. With more than 1.6 million VFW and Auxiliary members located in 6,200 Posts worldwide, the nonprofit veterans service organization is proud to proclaim “NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS” than the VFW, which is dedicated to veterans’ service, legislative advocacy, and military and community service programs. For more information or to join, visit our website at [www.VFW.org](http://www.VFW.org).

### NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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## 2023-2024 Theme

### “How are you inspired by America?”

**Student Entry Deadline: October 31, 2023**

**Patriotic Written Essay Competition Grand Prize: \$5,000 Award**

#### What is the Patriot's Pen Program?

Conducted nationwide, this VFW-sponsored youth essay competition gives students an opportunity to write essays expressing their views on an annual patriotic theme. We invite you to join the more than 73,000 students who participated last year in this contest.

#### Why Should I Enter?

Prizes and scholarships can be awarded at the Post, District, State and national level. Department (State) winners receive a portion of \$55,000 in national awards. National Winners will receive at least \$500. **The first-place national award is currently \$5,000.**

The Internal Revenue Service requires a recipient awarded more than \$599 be given Form 1099 identifying the proceeds as taxable income. This may require the winner to provide their social security number.

#### How Does the Contest Work?

All entries begin at the VFW Post level. The only exception is where schools/classes/youth groups have large numbers of students and wish to conduct their own competition, submitting one winner for each 15 students to the VFW Post. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post.

The contest consists of four levels. The first level (entry) is sponsored by VFW Posts. Post winners advance, one for every 15 entries, to the VFW District (regional) level where the one first-place winner is advanced to the VFW Department (state) level. The first-place winner at the Department level is then advanced into the VFW national competition.

#### Who Can Enter?

Patriot's Pen is open to 6th, 7th and 8th-grade students enrolled by the Oct. 31 deadline in public, private or parochial schools in the U.S., its territories or its possessions; or dependents of U.S. military or civilian personnel in overseas schools. Home-schooled students also are eligible. Although U.S. citizenship is not required, students must be lawful U.S. permanent residents or have applied for permanent residence (the application which has not been denied) and intends to become a U.S. citizen at the earliest opportunity allowed by law. (Foreign exchange students or former winners that placed in the National contest are ineligible.)

#### How Do I Get Started?

- Ask a teacher or youth group/club adult leader to supervise the Patriot's Pen writing contest.
- Contact a participating VFW Post and indicate your interest in participating.

- Establish a contact person who is a member of that VFW Post or its VFW Auxiliary.
- Make sure that your essay is submitted to the VFW Post before the contest deadline of October 31, 2023. You can submit your essay and entry form by email upon the Post's approval. Entries sent to the VFW National Headquarters directly will be returned.

#### How Am I Judged?

##### Knowledge of the theme is worth 30 points:

You must show a thorough knowledge of the theme in your work. Demonstrate you have researched the issue extensively.

##### Theme development is worth 35 points:

Answer all relevant facts about the theme such as the who, what, where, when and why. Relate the theme to your own experiences.

##### Clarity of ideas is worth 35 points:

Write your essay in an easy-to-understand format. Leave your reader with a clear understanding of your explanation of the theme.

#### What is the Theme?

VFW's Commander-in-Chief annually chooses the year's theme. The 2023-2024 theme is:

**“How are you inspired by America?”**

#### Deadline Information.

To qualify, all entries must be submitted to a sponsoring VFW Post by midnight October 31, 2023.

#### Note:

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post, follow these instructions:

First, visit [vfw.org/FindaPost](http://vfw.org/FindaPost) to “Find a VFW Post.”

If you don't have success in finding a Post, or if you have trouble contacting them, you can contact your VFW Department (state) headquarters office to see if they can offer any information or assistance. You can visit [vfw.org/contactus](http://vfw.org/contactus) to look for “Find a State Contact” to get your VFW state office's phone number and email.

**For assistance contact  
the VFW National Headquarters  
at 816.968.1155  
Email: [youthscholarships@vfw.org](mailto:youthscholarships@vfw.org)**

# 2023-2024 Official Entry Form Patriot's Pen Competition

Must Be Completed by All Contestants

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone

Email

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yy)

Grade in School

Essay Word Count

School Name, City, State

Teacher's name and Email (if applicable)

## To Be Completed by Student's Parent/Guardian

(Required even if student is 18 or over)

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's Email

## What Are the Rules?

• You must write your own essay.

• All essays should be typed in English with no color or graphics. 300 - 400 words in length (+ or - 5 word max). Every word is counted regardless of length. The essay title (theme) or added footnotes do not contribute to the word count.

• In no way may contestants identify themselves within their essay (including, but not limited to, your name, school, city, state, race or national origin.) Do not put your name on the essay. The entry form is your essays cover sheet. Secure the Official Student Entry Form with a staple or other fastener on top of your essay. Contestants are allowed to enter only once each year if otherwise eligible (one Post competition).

• The essay must be contestant's original work and a product of the contestant's own thinking. The approach to the Patriot's Pen theme should be positive and clearly focused. Poetry is not acceptable. Quotations may be used sparingly if plainly identified wherever used. A contestant's teacher, counselor or parent may check the essay for punctuation, grammar and/or spelling, but the content must remain the contestant's. Contestants will be judged on the basis of their essay alone and are not required to present the essay orally. All essays become the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The VFW retains non-exclusive rights to the use of your essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

• At any time during the contest additional participant personal information (i.e. SSN, photo, etc.) could be requested by the VFW.

## I Have Read and Understand the Contest Rules

Signature of Student Participant

Date

## To Be Completed by the VFW Post

I certify that this student has an authorized entry in our VFW Post level Patriot's Pen Competition.

Post Commander/Chairperson Signature

Post#

VFW Auxiliary President/Chairperson Signature (if applicable)

Post Address

City, State, Zip

VFW Post Email

No. of participants \_\_\_\_\_

No. of winners \_\_\_\_\_

Amt. of Post/Aux. scholarships awards \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (Banquet, Pins, etc.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## To Be Completed by the VFW District

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Patriot's Pen Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Department.

District Chairperson Signature

Dist. #

Address

City, State, Zip

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Phone

Email

## To Be Completed by the VFW Department Chairperson

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Patriot's Pen Department Competition and is our sole entry into the National Judging.

Department Chairperson Signature

(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone

Email

The winner  has been  will be (check one) notified that they are the first-place Department winner on \_\_\_\_\_.

## Local VFW Post Information:

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Time To Call: \_\_\_\_\_



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