



Department of Minnesota
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Top Reasons to Enter the American Legion Auxiliary Essay Contest in 2026

Why Students Should Participate and What They Can Gain

Introduction

The American Legion Auxiliary Essay Contest is a prestigious annual event that encourages students to reflect on patriotic themes, civic responsibility, and community service. Thousands of students (grades 3 to 12) participate annually exploring the fundamental rights and freedoms we enjoy today. As the 2026 contest approaches, students may wonder what makes this opportunity worthwhile. Below are some compelling reasons to consider entering the contest this year.

1. Recognition

Winning or placing in the contest brings public recognition, certificates, and sometimes opportunities to be featured in publications or at ceremonies. This acknowledgment can boost self-confidence and enhance resumes or college applications. Many American Legion Auxiliary essay contests offer small monetary awards to winners at the local unit, state, and national levels. District 3 has added competition at the district level for the third time with additional prizes. At the national level a winner in each class will receive \$50 and a \$50 donation in the student's name will be made to the Spirit of Youth Scholarship Fund. Most units put a picture of the winners in the newspaper and recognize them with a certificate. While the prizes may vary, the prestigious winners all have something to be proud of to add to their portfolio for future job applications or college applications.

2. Personal Growth and Skill Development

Writing an essay for the contest helps develop critical thinking, research, and communication skills. Participants learn to organize their thoughts, articulate their ideas clearly, and express themselves persuasively—valuable abilities for academic and professional success.

3. Civic Engagement and Patriotism

The contest encourages students to explore topics related to patriotism, Americanism, American values, history, military support, and civic duty. The topic or theme is chosen by the national Americanism Program Chairman each year. By participating, students deepen their understanding of national heritage and the importance of contributing positively to their communities.

4. Networking and Community Connections

Engaging in the contest connects students with local American Legion Auxiliary members and fellow participants. This network can provide mentorship, future volunteer opportunities, future involvement in other auxiliary sponsored youth activities, and lasting friendships.

5. Encouraging Service and Leadership

The American Legion Auxiliary emphasizes service to others and leadership in the community. The essay contest aligns with these values, inspiring students to think about how they can make a difference and develop leadership skills.

6. Opportunity to Share Your Voice

The contest gives students a platform to share their perspectives on meaningful issues. It's a chance to be heard and to inspire others through thoughtful writing.

Conclusion

Participating in the American Legion Auxiliary Essay Contest is more than just a writing exercise—it's an opportunity for personal development, recognition, and meaningful engagement with patriotic and civic themes. Students who choose to enter can gain invaluable skills, support, and confidence for their future endeavors.

I encourage all auxiliary members to reach out to youth in local schools, homeschooled, youth groups, etc to find participants for this year's contest. This year's theme is:

“Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and the Veterans Who Fought for Our Freedom.” This year's theme encourages youth to reflect on the significance of America's 250th birthday and the sacrifices made by veterans who have fought for the nation's freedom.

Tamara Thayer, Department Americanism Chairman