

ESSAY CONTEST with CASH PRIZES

In celebration of Constitution Day, the American Civil Liberties Union of Arizona – Southern Arizona Chapter is sponsoring an essay contest for **high school students (grades 9-12) attending school south of the Gila River**. The goal of the ACLU is to defend the Constitution and promote awareness of the Bill of Rights. (For more information about the mission and projects of the ACLU go to www.aclu.org, and for the ACLU of Arizona go to www.acluaz.org.) In accordance with our goals, we are inviting students to submit essays discussing their views about how the US Constitution applies to some current issues.

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Topic: This year's essay contest offers a choice of two topics. Please choose **ONE** of the following for your essay.

a) The First Amendment grants everyone, including students, the freedom to speak and express themselves without worrying about government interference or censorship. However, in a school setting, speech that people may find offensive, disruptive or inappropriate is often censored. For example, schools often ban students from wearing clothing that promotes alcohol or drug use. Some schools have attempted to ban the wearing of clothes or bracelets that some people say promote homosexual lifestyles. Other schools have attempted to ban anti-war symbols, student prayer circles, and sex education flyers. How should schools balance a student's right to free speech with concerns that some people may find some types of speech offensive, disruptive or inappropriate for a school setting?

b) Over the last 10 years, social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter have become very popular. Students use these sites to chat with friends, plan events or talk about their private lives. Unfortunately, sometimes students also use these sites to bully other students, make fun of teachers, and to insult their schools. Increasingly, school administrators are monitoring these websites and punishing students for comments they make about their school, their teachers, or other students. Should students face punishment for what they write on their own personal web pages? Is punishing students for what they write outside of school a violation of the First Amendment? Why or why not?

You are free to conduct outside research, but research is not required. (If you do use outside sources, please include a bibliography page; this will not count toward the page limit.)

Format: Essays should be no longer than 1000 words (4 double-spaced pages). Margins should be 1 inch on all sides, and font should be 12-point. Include the word count at the top of your essay. **DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON YOUR ESSAY.**

Application: Please complete the attached Contestant Information Form, and return it with your essay by mail to: ACLU-AZ Essay Contest, PO Box 44340, Tucson, AZ 85733 or as an email attachment to: essaycontest@aclusaz.org. (If you submit your essay by email, please include a separate page with the information requested on the Contestant Information Form.)

Deadline: Essays **MUST** be postmarked or sent via email no later than midnight of **April 1, 2012**.

Questions: Send questions to: essaycontest@aclusaz.org.

Prizes:

First Prize \$ 500
Second Prize \$ 250
Third Prize \$ 100

There are no right answers to these discussion questions, but there are better and worse arguments. Essays will be evaluated based on quality of the argument, clarity of expression, and form (grammar, punctuation, and spelling). Entries will be judged by a panel of members of the Southern Arizona Chapter of the ACLU. Decisions of the judges are final. Winners will be notified in May, 2012.

GOOD LUCK!

ESSAY CONTEST
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Arizona
Contestant Information Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone Number: () _____ Email: _____

Cell Phone Number: () _____

High School Name: _____

School Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

School Telephone Number: () _____

If you completed this essay for a class:

Teacher's name: _____

Teacher's email address: _____

Class: _____

I am a high school (please circle one): Freshman / Sophomore / Junior / Senior

Please tell us how you heard about this essay contest:

___ my teacher

___ a friend

___ announcement on bulletin board

___ an email

___ newspaper

___ other

Check this box if you would like to receive information, via email, about upcoming events for the ACLU-Arizona Southern Chapter.

Return this Contestant Information Form with your essay **NO LATER THAN APRIL 1, 2012** to:

ACLU-AZ Essay Contest

PO Box 44340

Tucson, AZ 85733

or include the information in your email: **essaycontest@aclusaz.org**

Questions may be directed to:

essaycontest@aclusaz.org