



NEWS RELEASE

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Pennsylvania and Virginia students earn top honors in NCSC's Civics Education Essay Contest

Williamsburg, Va. (April 26, 2017) – A fifth-grader from Virginia and an eighth-grader and a 12th-grader from Pennsylvania won first place in the National Center for State Courts' 2017 Civics Education Essay Contest, which explores the 14th Amendment by asking "What does it mean to be a U.S. citizen?" NCSC's essay contest is held annually to commemorate Law Day, May 1.

More than 700 students from 19 states participated. First place winners include:

- Alana Fiscella, a fifth grader at Walsingham Academy Lower School in Williamsburg, Virginia;
- **Ryan Mendelhall, an eighth grader at North Brandywine Middle School in Coatesville, Pennsylvania;** and
- **Maria Goelz, a twelfth-grade homeschool student from Evans City, Pennsylvania (Butler County)**

Contest entries were divided into three age categories: third to fifth grade, sixth to eighth grade, and ninth to 12th grade. Before judging, students' names, schools, and the representative states were removed from the entries. The winning essays were selected based on accuracy, originality, and creativity. Judges were Presiding Judge of Cleveland Municipal Court Ronald Adrine, and a member of NCSC Board of Directors; and attorney Monica Segura, partner of Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell in Miami, Florida, and co-chair of [NCSC's Young Lawyer's Committee](#).

Second and third place winners:

- 3rd – 5th grade: Maya Pedroza from the Orange Unified School District in Orange, California, received second place; and **Jaden Maldando from McNichols Educational Plaza in Scranton, Pennsylvania**, was the third-place winner.
- 6th – 8th grade: Addison Dempsey from Ni River Middle School in Spotsylvania, Virginia, won second place; and Alejandra Ramos from Manatee Middle School in Naples, Florida, is the third-place winner.
- 9th – 12th grade: James Brown and Ryan McDaniel from Wortham High School in Wortham, Texas, received second place and third place, respectively.

[Read the winning essay entries here.](#)

Law Day 2017 recognizes the 14th Amendment, which was signed nearly 150 years ago, and granted citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States.” It also forbids states from denying any person “life, liberty, or property without due process of law.”

The National Center for State Courts, headquartered in Williamsburg, Va., is a nonprofit court organization dedicated to improving the administration of justice by providing leadership and service to the state courts. Founded in 1971 by the Conference of Chief Justices and Chief Justice of the United States Warren E. Burger, NCSC provides education, training, technology, management, and research services to the nation’s state courts.

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