



2011-2012

## VOICE OF DEMOCRACY PROGRAM



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Post 5520-7



The 2011-12 Theme is  
**“Is There Pride in Serving in our Military?”**

#### **Program Overview**

The Voice of Democracy Scholarship Competition is especially designed for high school students from grades 9 through 12 including home school students. It is a valuable educational experience for students and a wonderful opportunity for positive publicity for the VFW in your area schools and communities. The program dates back to 1946 and continues to be one of the VFW's most exciting programs. The VFW annually commits \$3 million in scholarships and incentives at the post, district, state and national levels. Participants write and then record a three to five minute essay on a patriotic theme selected annually. V.O.D. is endorsed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and is designed to foster patriotism in the participants and to enhance their written and oral communication skills. In addition, this program demonstrates to your local schools and community the VFW's interest in the youth of today.

#### **Key Information for Posts**

Make this program a joint effort with your auxiliary. Contact the schools and youth groups in your area both in the spring and in the fall. There are a growing number of home schooled students across the state and many are interested in participating in academic competitions. Order a supply of entry forms or duplicate a downloaded copy from national's web site, [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org). Distribute the entry forms and promotional material widely. Contact the print and broadcast media in your area in September to create more awareness of the Voice of Democracy competition and later to publicize the winners. Become completely familiar with the competition rules and actively market the program. Submit your post winning entries to your district chairman on time and with all required material (see the next section for requirements). Review the resources section below on how the VFW is prepared to help you with this year's V.O.D. contest.

#### **Key Information for Districts**

With your auxiliary counterpart, reach out to each post and auxiliary in your district to encourage and assist the post program in any way needed. Be sure your district winner's entry material is sent to the State Headquarters to arrive not later than December 17 and that you include all of the following:

- 1) recorded speech (tape or CD), typed copy of speech,
- 2) entry form with all necessary signatures,

## Voice of Democracy 2011-2012 Program Continued

- 3) two glossy head and shoulder color photographs and
- 4) Introduction questionnaire (this form is printed in this booklet).

Please understand that all that information is critical both to comply with national requirements and to allow the printing of the program book distributed at the State Awards Banquet. If critical information is not received timely, I may need to contact your student directly even if you have not yet announced your district winner. Please send in a complete entry so that this action is not required. The District Report Form listing the post participation, awards and other monies spent is due December 30. District chairman will be mailed a copy of this form in the fall.

### **Key Dates**

November 1, Student entries to post

November 15, Post judging complete

Check on your District's due date

December 6, District judging complete

**December 16, District winners due to the State Headquarters**

**December 28, 2011, State Judging**

December 30, District Report Form due to the State Headquarters

February 11, State Voice of Democracy Awards Banquet, Springfield

### **Prize Structure at National and State Levels**

The winner from each state competition earns a trip to Washington DC and competes for national awards which range from a minimum \$1,000 up to \$30,000 for first place. The State awards are:

1 <sup>st</sup> Place - George G. Gorin, Jr. Memorial Award .....	\$3,000 Cash
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place – Terry L. McKinney Memorial Award .....	\$1,750 Cash
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place – Cramer/Harrell Award .....	\$1,750 Cash
4 <sup>th</sup> Place – Dale & Catherine Clifton Award .....	\$1,500 Cash
5 <sup>th</sup> Place – Vern & Lorraine Umphery, Post 6863 & L.A. Award .....	\$1,000 Cash
6 <sup>th</sup> Place – Robert C. Holysz Post 2200 Award .....	\$500 Cash
7 <sup>th</sup> Place – Jarnell/Ross Award .....	\$450 Cash
8 <sup>th</sup> Place – Grant-Parkholme Post 9115 Award .....	\$400 Cash
9 <sup>th</sup> Place – Dick Cosner Memorial Award .....	\$375 Cash
10 <sup>th</sup> Place – West End VFW Post 2004 Memorial Award .....	\$350 Cash
11 <sup>th</sup> Place – Chester Spears Memorial Award .....	\$325 Cash
All other District Winners will receive an award of .....	\$300 Cash

Districts and Posts wishing to become an Award sponsor should forward their donation of \$300 to State Headquarters by December 31, 2011 earmarked V.O.D. Award Sponsorship Fee. Thank you for this valuable support of the state program.

Each of the District Champions will be provided two nights free lodging in Springfield and one ticket to the Voice of Democracy Awards Banquet.

The post sponsoring the State winner will receive a beautifully engraved plaque and the District with the largest increase in student participation over 2010-11 will be presented a plaque at the State Convention.

## Resources

- The National Program Guide for 2011-12 is an excellent source of information on Voice of Democracy. The complete program guide has been sent by national to each post commander and quartermaster but you can download or print it from [www.vfwStateresources.org](http://www.vfwStateresources.org). (This website address is for internal VFW use and should not be publicized more broadly.) To find this document click on the VFW logo next to the words Program Information and then click on It's About Service. Scroll through this document to find the V.O.D. section which includes information on promoting the program, selecting judges, judging criteria, score sheets and sample press releases.
- You can refer interested students, parents and teachers to National's website [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org) (click on Programs, then on VFW Scholarship Programs and then on Voice of Democracy) for an explanation of the program and to download an entry form with complete contest rules. You can also download or print a judging score sheet from this site.
- National's supply catalog has printed entry forms, posters and a wide variety of awards and gifts designed for use in the V.O.D program. 1-800-821-2606 or [www.vfwstore.org](http://www.vfwstore.org).
- The State Voice of Democracy Director and Assistant Directors are anxious to help your post and district have its most successful V.O.D. program yet. If you have any questions about V.O.D., let us know. Our contact information is at the front of this section.
- An E-mailed series of hints and tips about starting or growing a successful V.O.D. program will be sent to anyone who writes me at [vfw5520@aol.com](mailto:vfw5520@aol.com) asking to be added to the distribution list. I am happy to share ideas and approaches that have worked for various posts I have talked to over the years. Every community, school, post and auxiliary is unique and what works in one place will not necessarily work in another. However, if you would like to hear what has worked for others, let me know. Also, if you have some hints and tips to share, send them to me so I can pass on your success stories too. We all win if we can encourage more participation in this unique program. Today's youth are tomorrow's voters and leaders.

## X Sheet Reporting

The X for the Voice of Democracy will be posted in January based upon the report submitted by each district V.O.D. chairman to the state director. Commander Phillips and I encourage all posts to actively participate in the Voice of Democracy Program. However, recognizing that some posts are just not able to generate a student entry, an X for V.O.D can also be earned by making a donation (\$200 for posts with 100 members or more or \$100 for posts with fewer than 100 members). Send your check to the state headquarters office by April 30 with a notation that it is for the Voice of Democracy program.

**Promote patriotism in our youth through the Voice of Democracy program as**

**“WE CONTINUE TO SERVE”**



## VOICE OF DEMOCRACY INTRODUCTION SHEET

Representing VFW Post \_\_\_\_\_ and its Ladies Auxiliary, A  
\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
(Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior) (School Name)  
in \_\_\_\_\_  
(City)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student Name)

With \_\_\_\_\_ today, is/are his/her

Parents:

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

Other (Brother, Sister, Teacher, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate after the names, how they are pronounced so that you may be introduced correctly.



**WHAT IS THE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY PROGRAM?**

Since 1947, the Voice of Democracy has been the Veterans of Foreign Wars' (VFW's) premier scholarship program. Each year, more than 50,000 high school students compete for more than \$2.3 million in scholarships and incentives. Students compete by writing and recording a broadcast script on an annual patriotic theme. This year's theme is, *Is There Pride in Serving in Our Military?*

**WHY SHOULD I ENTER?**

Prizes and scholarships are awarded at the local, district, state and national level. Department (State) winners receive an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., March 3-7, 2012, to tour the city, meet our nation's leaders, be honored by the VFW and its Ladies Auxiliary and receive their portion of \$151,000 in national awards, the top scholarship being \$30,000.

**THE RULES**

**Who can enter?**

The Voice of Democracy is open to students in grades 9-12, who are enrolled in a public, private or parochial high school or home study program in the United States, its territories and possessions; or in an overseas U.S. military/civilian dependent school. Foreign exchange students, students age 20 or over and previous Voice of Democracy first place state winners are ineligible.

**What do I need to enter?**

Record your original 3-5 minute (+ or - 5 seconds max.) essay on a standard cassette tape or CD. One student per CD or cassette. Preferred format for CD's is the audio CD format. When burning your CD, make sure that "Create Audio CD" option (or similar) is selected so the program can properly convert your sound file and burn it to CD. After it has finished, be sure to play back your audio CD on a system other than your computer, such as a standard radio or car CD player, to verify that the conversion/burning process was successful. Label the recording, neatly typed essay and attach this completed entry form. Provide these items to your school/group competition or local VFW Post for judging. All recordings must be in your own voice. Hearing/speech impaired students should contact the Voice of Democracy National Office at (816) 968-1117 for special instructions. No music, singing, poetry or sound effects are allowed. The body of the essay must not identify you in any way, although the recording & typed essay should be labeled with your name, to show ownership. You may enter only one Voice of Democracy competition per year.

**Where do I submit my entry?**

All entries begin at the 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 local VFW Post competition. Individual students may submit their entry directly to the Post providing they have not competed at a school/class competition.

One winner for every 15 entries from each Post advances to District and one District winner advances to the state (Department) competition. State winners are invited to Washington, D.C where their essays compete in the finals competition.

If you need help finding a participating VFW Post in your area, call (816) 968-1117, e-mail to [kharmer@vfw.org](mailto:kharmer@vfw.org) or visit our website at [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org).

**2011-12 OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM  
VOICE OF DEMOCRACY COMPETITION  
MUST BE COMPLETED BY ALL CONTESTANTS**

Name: First, M.I., Last

Address

City, State, Zip

( )

Home Phone

E-mail

Date of Birth

Grade in School

School Name, City, State

First Name You'd Like on Your Badge

Jacket Size

**TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT'S PARENT/GUARDIAN**

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

( )

Parent/Guardian's Daytime Phone

Parent/Guardian's E-mail

**I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE RULES  
(ON OPPOSITE SIDE)**

I certify that I am the sole author of the enclosed audio/essay entry and that I have only entered the competition once.

I understand that if it is found that I have entered any other Post's competition or used this essay for another VFW competition, I face elimination from the competition and will return any and all prizes or incentives awarded.

Signature of Student Participant

Date



**OFFICIAL RULES FOR STUDENTS ADVANCING TO NATIONAL LEVEL**

If selected as a first-place state winner, I have the consent of my parent/guardian and school to attend the Voice of Democracy National Finals in Washington, D.C. as a guest of the VFW National Organization.

I understand that state winners who do not attend as stated above will forfeit all rights to compete in the National Finals and will be replaced by their state's second place winner.

In the event my tape is selected for entry into the National Voice of Democracy Competition, I do hereby for myself, for my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns; waive, release and discharge all rights and claims which I have or which may hereafter accrue against the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and/or the several Departments (state organizations) of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and their respective officers, agents, successors and assigns from any damages which may be sustained by me in connection with my participation in or association with the VFW Voice of Democracy Competition and/or arising out of my travel to and during the Competition. In the event of sickness, accident or injury in connection with the Competition, I consent to and accept the services of a duly licensed medical, surgical or dental specialist selected on my behalf and for such treatments, as they may deem necessary. I understand that VFW will not be liable for such treatment. I further understand that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States retains non-exclusive rights to use my tape, essay and likeness in the promotion and execution of the organization's programs and activities.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW/AUXILIARY POST**

I certify that this student is an authorized entry in our VFW Post Level Voice of Democracy Competition.

Post Commander's/Chairman's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Post # \_\_\_\_\_

Ladies Auxiliary President's/Chairman's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Post Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

No. of students participating \_\_\_\_\_

No. of winners advanced to District \_\_\_\_\_

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

Amt. of Post/Aux. additional expenses (banquet, pins, etc.) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW/AUXILIARY DISTRICT**

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected winner of the Voice of Democracy Contest District Competition and is our sole entry into the Department finals.

District Chairman's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Dist. # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VFW DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN**

I certify that the student named in the previous section is the duly selected first-place winner of the Voice of Democracy Department Competition, is our sole entry into the National Judging and will attend the National Finals in Washington, D.C.

Department Chairman's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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

Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

The winner  has been  will be (check one) notified that they are the first place Department winner on \_\_\_\_\_. Note: National Headquarters will contact your winner after this date to make travel arrangements for them to be in Washington, D.C.

**What is the deadline for my entry?**

All entries competing at the Post level must be in the hands of that VFW Post by midnight, **Nov. 1, 2011**. It is the responsibility of the student to meet this deadline by submitting their entry to the proper location by ensuring it is a participating Post.

**WHAT ARE THE JUDGING CRITERIA?**

**Originality is worth 30 points:**

Treatment of the theme should show imagination and human interest.

**Content is worth 35 points:**

Clearly express your ideas in an organized manner. Fully develop your theme and use transitions to move smoothly from one idea to another.

**Delivery is worth 35 points:**

Speak in a clear and credible manner.

**THE IMPACT OF THE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY**

National finalist Stephanie D'Abruzzo Shemin is a graduate of Northwestern University in Speech and a performer with the Jim Henson Company's Muppets.

**"What VOD did was prepare me for college and the real world. I saw how I could find my place in this world."**

Past national winner Dr. Gary Belkin is a psychiatrist and ethicist at Harvard and Brown Medical Schools.

**"The whole Voice of Democracy program was an experience that is still with me."**

*The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) has again approved this contest for its National Advisory List of Contests and Activities.*



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Veterans of Foreign Wars & Ladies Auxiliary  
 Kansas City, Missouri  
 816.968.1117  
 E-Mail: [kharmer@vfw.org](mailto:kharmer@vfw.org)  
[www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org)

EMBLEM AND SUPPLY ORDER NO. 4420

**LOCAL VFW POST INFORMATION:**

**CONTACT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BEST TIME TO CALL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ALTERNATE CONTACT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BEST TIME TO CALL:** \_\_\_\_\_