

# 2018 NINTH CIRCUIT CIVICS CONTEST

**The 14th Amendment  
- 150 Years after Ratification -**

**What Does  
Equal Protection  
Mean to  
Students?**

**CASH PRIZES!**

1<sup>ST</sup> \$2,000  
2<sup>ND</sup> \$1,000  
3<sup>RD</sup> \$500

For more information visit:  
<http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>



An essay and video contest for high school students in the western United States and Pacific Islands. Sponsored by the U.S. Federal Courts for the Ninth Circuit. Contest rules and instructions will be available on January 2, 2018, at: <http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>

# 150 Years after Ratification of the 14th Amendment: What Does Equal Protection Mean to Students?

Ratified on July 9, 1868, the 14th Amendment to the Constitution provides, in part, that no state can “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” Over the past 150 years, Congress and the courts have applied this “Equal Protection Clause” to our right to equal educational opportunities. Noteworthy court decisions include:

- Mendez v. Westminster School District, decided in 1947, in which the placement of Mexican-American students into separate “Mexican schools” was found to violate their rights under the Equal Protection Clause;
- Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, decided in 1954, in which the placement of white and African-American students in different public schools on the basis of race was also found to violate the Equal Protection Clause;
- Lau v. Nichols, decided in 1974, in which the lack of supplemental language instruction in public school for students with limited English proficiency was found to have violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, decided in 1978, and Grutter v. Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger, decided in 2003, in which certain affirmative action policies used by two universities to increase minority enrollment were upheld while others were struck down; and
- Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District, decided in 2017, in which public schools were required, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, to provide disabled students with opportunities to make meaningful, “appropriately ambitious” progress, such as grade-level advancement.



*Federal court decisions ended the practice of having segregated schools for Mexican-American and African-American students.*

Congress applied the Equal Protection Clause to education by enacting laws governing state school programs or activities:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits exclusion of a student based solely on race, color or national origin;
- Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, enacted in 1972, which prohibits exclusion of a student solely on the basis of sex;
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits exclusion of a student based solely on the basis of a disability; and
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, which provides protections and educational opportunities for students with disabilities.

## The prompt for the 2018 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest is “What does equal protection mean to students?”

Students should consider how the Equal Protection Clause applies in high schools, colleges and graduate schools, whether in admissions, classrooms or on athletic fields. Individual students can express their thoughts and ideas in an essay of between 500 and 1,000 words. Individuals and teams of up to three students can produce a 3-5 minute video on the theme. A student may submit both an essay and video. A student may submit only one essay and be involved in the production of only one video.

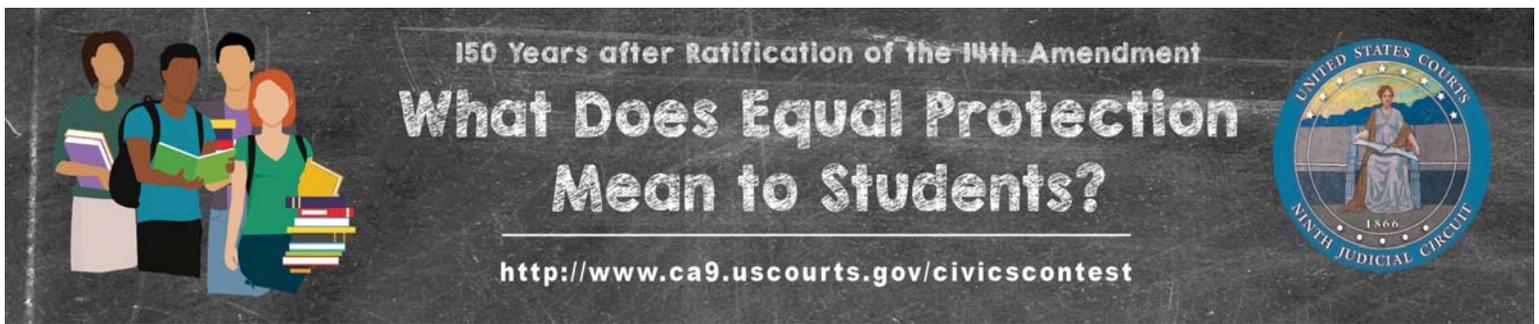
The essay or video should: 1) Demonstrate an understanding of the historical background of the Equal Protection Clause; 2) Explain the constitutional powers and rights relevant to the court cases and laws mentioned above; and 3) Discuss the important role of the Judicial Branch in preserving the rights of Americans to equal education.

The 2018 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest is open to high school students in nine western states and two Pacific island jurisdictions. Students from public, private, parochial and charter schools and home-schooled students of equivalent grade status may enter.

**CASH PRIZES** for Winners of the Essay and Video Competitions

**1<sup>st</sup> place: \$2,000\***    **2<sup>nd</sup> place: \$1,000**    **3<sup>rd</sup> place: \$500**

\*Plus! Travel and accommodations to attend the 2018 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference in Anaheim, California



## Organizing and Promoting the 2018 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest

The contest is sponsored by the Ninth Circuit Courts and Community Committee in collaboration with all of the federal courts of the circuit. This handout is meant to help you organize and promote the contest in your district. Contact the Office of the Circuit Executive by email, [civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov](mailto:civicscontest@ce9.uscourts.gov), or phone, (415) 355-8973, for more information. Here are some frequently asked questions and answers:

### **How is the circuit-wide contest organized?**

The contest begins with competition at the district level. The top three finishers at the district level are automatically entered as finalists at the circuit level. The goal is to have all 15 districts of the circuit represented in the finalist field. This applies to both the essay and video competitions.

### **How will essays and videos be collected?**

Students will enter the contest and submit essays and videos using an Internet website. The website will inform students about the rules and judging criteria, and provide informational resources. Entries will be grouped by district to facilitate judging at the district level.

### **How will the judging be done at the district level?**

Most districts will hold local contests and select the three essays and videos that will become finalists at the circuit level. Some districts will not hold a local contest but will conduct judging. In districts that do not hold a local contest or conduct the judging, the circuit will provide a judging panel. Blind judging will be employed throughout.

### **What will be the judging criteria?**

Contest rules and judging criteria will be uniform throughout the circuit. Judging will be based on the quality of the research, critical thinking and creative expression evident in the essay or video. The contest rules and judging criteria will be made available from the contest website on January 2, 2018.

### **Who may serve as judges?**

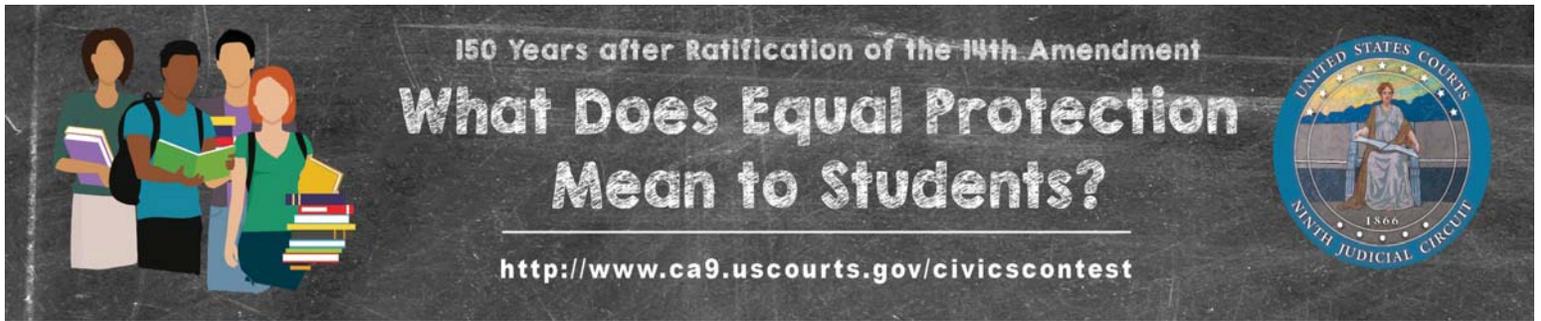
Judging panels may consist of circuit, district, magistrate and bankruptcy judges, law clerks, staff attorneys, other court staff, lawyer representatives and other members of the bar, and educators, including teachers, curriculum coordinators and administrators.

### **How will the contest be promoted?**

The circuit and districts will jointly promote the contest. The circuit will develop the contest website; produce customized promotional materials; provide lists of education contacts; and publicize the contest to the media. Judges, lawyers and court staff in the districts will reach out to students, their parents, teachers and other educators.

### **What might be involved in district outreach?**

Visits to schools to speak with principals, curriculum coordinators, classroom teachers and students. Advising school counselors of a scholarship opportunity. Arranging for notices in school newspapers and websites. Informing parent groups. Distributing posters and flyers to schools, libraries, etc.



**What is the Theme?**

The theme of the contest is “150 Years after Ratification of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment: What Does Equal Protection Mean to Students.” Students are asked to consider how Congress and the courts, through legislation and legal decisions, have applied the Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to promote equal educational opportunities for everyone. The official prompt is: “*What does equal protection mean to students?*”

**Who May Enter the Contest?**

The contest is open to high school students or home-schooled students of equivalent grade status living within the Ninth Circuit. The contest has two components: 1) Individual students can express their thoughts and ideas in an essay of 500 to 1,000 words, and 2) Individual students or teams of up to three students may submit a 3-5 minute video on the theme. A student may participate in both the essay and video competitions, but cannot be involved in more than one video. Children of federal judges, chambers staff, and other court personnel may not participate. More information will be available at <http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>, beginning January 2, 2018.

**What Are the Prizes?**

A total of \$7,000 in cash prizes will be awarded. The top three finishers in both the essay and video competition will receive \$2,000 for 1<sup>st</sup> place, \$1,000 for 2<sup>nd</sup> place and \$500 for 3<sup>rd</sup> place. In addition, the 1<sup>st</sup>-place winners along with a parent or guardian will be invited to the 2018 Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference in Anaheim. Prize money, travel and accommodations, and other contest costs are funded through attorney admission fees collected by the courts for educational programs benefitting the bar and community.

**Civics Contest Schedule**

October 2017	Promotional efforts begin
January 2, 2018	Contest website goes online (rules, judging criteria, resources available)
February 1, 2018	Contest officially opens (entries accepted)
April 1, 2018	Contest officially closes (entries no longer accepted)
April 27, 2018	Entries distributed to districts
April 30, 2018	District-level judging begins
May 15, 2018	District-level winners announced
May 22, 2018	Circuit-level judging begins
June 6, 2018	Circuit-level winners announced
July 23, 2018	Winners recognized at circuit conference

**Of Special Note**

In 2018, the Federal Judges Association and the Federal Bar Association are cosponsoring a national civics contest that also focuses on how the Equal Protection Clause has helped to achieve equal educational opportunities for all. Students living in the Ninth Circuit may also participate in the FJA/FBA contest, potentially increasing their chances to win cash prizes. In short, a student may write an essay and/or produce a video and enter that essay and/or video in both the FJA/FBA contest and the Ninth Circuit contest. The FJA/FBA contest begins and ends earlier than ours so it may be that a student enters that contest first, then spends some time polishing her/his entry before submitting to the Ninth Circuit. The ultimate goal is to increase participation in both contests. We will provide more information about the FJA/FBA contest as it becomes available.