Who May Enter
The essay contest is open to students currently in grades 9 through 12 from Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. Note: Children, grandchildren, stepchildren, and members of the household of a federal judge or federal judiciary employee are excluded from the competition.

Length & Format
Essays are limited to 1000 words. Citations should be placed in footnotes, endnotes, or bibliographies and excluded from the word count. Submit your essay as a Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat PDF document. Do not include your name on your essay.

Submission Deadline
Your essay and contest entry form must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, April 15, 2018. The contest entry form — found at www.ca4.uscourts.gov/essay-contest-2018 — includes instructions for submitting your essay.

Judging
Judging will be based on the following criteria:

- Understanding of constitutional principles (35 points)
- Clarity and effectiveness in expressing the theme (30 points)
- Grammar, spelling, and composition (20 points)
- Originality (15 points)

Awards
Winners will be announced in June and presented at a Constitution Day event in September 2018.

Questions
Contact the Fourth Circuit Clerk’s Office at essaycontest@ca4.uscourts.gov or (804) 916-2706.

Missing the submission deadline, providing false entry information, and plagiarizing content are grounds for disqualification.