

We the People
insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common
and our Posterity. We do ordain and establish this Consti

2021 Fourth Circuit Essay Contest

In his inaugural address 60 years ago, President John F. Kennedy uttered a profound and enduring challenge regarding citizenship: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." As Kennedy recognized, citizenship carries with it both rights and responsibilities.

What are the responsibilities of citizenship, and how do those responsibilities support and reinforce the rule of law?



Constitution Day Program

**Virtual Ceremony
September 17, 2021
2:30 p.m. ET**



and within every subsequent Term of ten years, on such Man
thirty thousand, but each State shall have at least one Rep
entitled to choose one Representative from each of its
eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Ca
When vacancies happen in the Representation from any
The House of Representatives shall choose their Spea
Section. 3. The Electors in the United States shall be compo
Senator shall have
Immediately after the first meeting of the Senate, one-third
of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expir
Class at the Expiration of the first Year, so that one-third may
Receipt of the Legislature of the State in which the Executive thereof may
such Vacancies.
No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have atte
not when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he

Program

OPENING REMARKS

THE HONORABLE ROGER L. GREGORY
Chief Judge

INTRODUCTION

SUZANNE B. CORRIELL

READING OF THE THIRD PLACE ESSAY

ELI BAILEY

Introduced by Jocelyn Mitchell Manion

READING OF THE SECOND PLACE ESSAY

TAYLOR KOHN

Introduced by Sarah Carr

READING OF THE FIRST PLACE ESSAY

HUDA HAQUE

Introduced by Joseph L. Coleman, Jr.

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS & CLOSING REMARKS

THE HONORABLE ROGER L. GREGORY

About the Contest

As long as we remain focused on promoting young citizens' understanding of the Constitution, it will remain a powerful instrument for ensuring the stability of our government and the liberty of the governed. The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit is pleased to have contributed to this effort through the 2021 Fourth Circuit Essay Contest.

In his inaugural address 60 years ago, President John F. Kennedy uttered a profound and enduring challenge regarding citizenship: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." As Kennedy recognized, citizenship carries with it both rights and responsibilities. Students were invited to consider and share their thoughts on the question: "What are the responsibilities of citizenship, and how do those responsibilities support and reinforce the rule of law?"

The contest was open to high school students currently in grades 9 through 12 in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The court received 217 submissions. The top three submissions were selected by our panel of judges through a blind review process.

The court extends its appreciation to its distinguished panel of judges for their work in reviewing the essays and selecting the top three submissions: **Claire Raj, J.D.**, Associate Professor of Law and Director, Education Rights Clinic, University of South Carolina School of Law; **Tara Casey, J.D.**, Professor of Law and Director, Carrico Center for Pro Bono & Public Service, University of Richmond School of Law; **Carolyn A. Dubay, J.D.**, Executive Director, North Carolina Judicial Standards Commission; **Marilyn Ogburn, J.D.**, Attorney, Baltimore, Maryland; **Patricia Proctor, J.D.**, Founding Director, Simon Perry Center for Constitutional Democracy, Marshall University.

We would like to thank the judges, attorneys, educators, court staff, and students from throughout the Fourth Circuit whose contributions of time and effort helped make our annual high school essay contest a success.

Third Place ★★ Eli Bailey ★★ Fairfax, VA



Eli Bailey is a freshman at the University of Virginia after graduating from Oakton High School in Vienna, VA. His favorite subjects are math, science, computer science, and government. He plans to major and pursue a career in chemistry or a related field. Eli's interests include volunteering at his synagogue, basketball and other sports, and proofreading for Project Gutenberg.

In the United States, citizens have a role to carry out both civic duties and responsibilities. While duties such as following the law, paying taxes, and serving on a jury (1) are important, civic responsibilities are what allow democracy to remain intact. Civic responsibilities include voting, staying politically informed, and being active in one's community. All actions that, while not legally required, are essential to an optimal political and democratic environment. One of the key aspects in upholding democracy is the rule of law, a principle stating the importance of accountability under the law for all individuals, no matter how their position or status (2). The civic responsibilities of U.S. citizens reinforce and support the rule of law by ensuring that elected officials are truly representative of the people and that citizens have the knowledge to call out people who are infringing upon the rule of law and its values.

The first way in which civic responsibilities bolsters the rule of law is through the election of officials, such that they represent and are held accountable by the people and uphold the rule of law. This is primarily ensured through voting, which is the most impactful of the civic responsibilities. Despite not being legally required, it is

drastically important for all citizens to share their voice and vote, and to do so in every election. While certain elections such as the presidential one every 4 years often receive greater media coverage and popularity, it is just as important, if not more, to vote in other elections, such as those for local and state officials. These individuals create public policy that is likely more directly impactful to citizens than that made federally, but they still receive much lesser voter turnout. Even if someone believes they are in a non-competitive state and that a certain party will easily run away with an election, it is still important to cast a vote to ensure that the true will of the people is heard, rather than the will of the louder minority. Voting maintains the rule of law because it ensures that people in office are held accountable (2). If someone faces no potential repercussions for their actions, then they will act freely and solely attempt to further their agenda. However, by facing elections, they must ensure that they are doing what is best for the people, and in a manner that is within the law, or else they will be voted out from office and lose their power. Additionally, voting allows officials to be chosen for their merit in maintaining the rule of law, as actions such as legislation and appointees, both key facets of the rule of law, are directly impacted by elected officials. Overall, the civic responsibility of voting drastically affects the reinforcement of the rule of law by ensuring that officials are held accountable and do what they can to defend the rule of law as well.

The civic responsibilities of citizens also fortify the rule of law by guaranteeing that the people can call out those who are encroaching on it. Another of the key civic responsibilities is to stay informed, both in terms of community and national issues and information. By staying informed and up to date, citizens are able to act accordingly in a manner that best serves the democratic process. Additionally, informed people are likely to make a more nuanced and thoughtful decision when fulfilling other civic responsibilities like voting. One other aspect of staying informed is allowing others within one's community to stay informed as well. This means performing other civic responsibilities such as tolerance (1), where a fair and equal opportunity is presented for all, no matter their demographic status. By doing so, it means that more people have

greater access to information, allowing them to stay informed as well, which improves democratic integrity for all involved. Adding on to this, just as important as ensuring information is available to all in a manner that is not discriminatory or exclusive, it is important to pass on this information and these values, such that future generations can uphold these principles as well. Clear and concise information combined with the responsibility to stay informed allows for the law to be public and applied evenly, another portion of the rule of law (2). The more people are informed, the more they can interpret and denounce violations of the rule of law, and open information allows these denouncements to be heard widely and not be suppressed. In general, the responsibilities of staying informed and passing on and maintaining open access to information for all allows the rule of law to be properly followed along with the ability to call out those who do not.

Overall, the civic responsibilities of citizens of the United States tie in directly with the rule of law, and both work in tandem to reinforce each other and the principles of democracy within the nation. However, it is lastly important to remember that civic responsibilities are not a one-time action, and require persistent effort to follow. For the rule of law to be truly supported, people must consistently vote, stay informed, share and ensure open access to information, and more, such that when attempts to infringe upon the concepts of accountability and just and impartial law occur, they can be thwarted and prevented.

Works Cited

“Responsibilities of U.S. Citizens.” *Cyber Civics*, Kansas Secretary of State, www.civics.ks.gov/kansas/citizenship/responsibilities-of-citizens.html. Accessed 28 May 2021.

“What Is the Rule of Law?” *World Justice Project*, worldjusticeproject.org/about-us/overview/what-rule-law. Accessed 28 May 2021.

Second Place ★★ Taylor Kohn ★★ Columbia, SC



Taylor Kohn is a senior with South Carolina Association of Independent Homeschools in Columbia, SC. Her favorite subjects are political policy, geography, and human anatomy. She plans to study nursing as an undergraduate, with interest in traveling the country as a nurse and working in various specialties. She would then like to attend graduate school and pursue a degree in politics and public policy. Taylor is an avid reader and enjoys watching documentaries. She loves to cook, hike, volunteer, exercise, hang out with her sisters, and play with her two dogs. Taylor also enjoys learning new skills — in the past year she has started gardening, painting, and cross-stitching.

The Responsibilities of Citizenship and their Role in Reinforcing the Rule of Law

Theodore Roosevelt said that “The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight.” Truer words have never been spoken. To be a citizen in a free country is an incredible blessing, and it is only right that we treat it as such. Even though individual citizens might disagree on the politics of a nation, we know that the responsibilities granted to us as citizens tie us together and allow us to cooperate on an individual level to benefit society as a whole.

A citizen is one who, by birth, nationality of a parent, or naturalization is granted the rights and responsibilities of being a member of a national community. As citizens, we have a few

obligations that we must meet to the best of our abilities. These include obeying the laws of the land, paying taxes, and serving on a jury. Obeying local, state, and federal laws, and facing the consequences when they are broken, allows society to function more smoothly and in a way that benefits all. Paying our fair share of taxes funds social programs, schools, infrastructure and national defense. This strengthens our communities and allows for more widespread prosperity and security. Jury service and active participation in the judicial process helps ensure accountability to each other, while a trial by jury is designed to try to apply the law evenly across gender, race, religion, and financial background.

In addition to the aforementioned obligations, we also have multiple civil responsibilities and duties that must be upheld for the preservation of democracy as we know it. Most importantly, citizens must vote. Citizen participation in elections is vital to our government, allowing us to exercise our right to freely choose our leaders. Voting is a right and a privilege, but it is, most importantly, a commitment that must be fulfilled to ensure that democracy is maintained for future generations. It is a moral obligation that we must uphold; it is how we, as citizens, can be active in the civic process.

Education is critical to having informed citizens who are able to invest back into their communities. Citizens must remain informed of local, state, judicial, national, and international issues in order for us to better our communities. When we know what is occurring in our state, nation, and in the world, as well as knowing who our politicians are and what they stand for, we can better elect those who represent our ideals. The better that we understand the issues affecting our immediate and extended communities, the better we can serve our community and our country. Just as it is impossible to fix a problem if you do not know that it exists, it is equally difficult to provide support for beneficial solutions if you are not educated as to the options.

These responsibilities also tie into community involvement, another vitally important civic action available to citizens. Community involvement is maintaining the safety and security of our communities and meeting the needs of the people living in those communities.

Empowering our communities, whether through activism, charities, or community development projects, establishes a way for

help and change to come directly from the people who benefit from it the most. It empowers more people to be more proactive in their lives and communities, leading to safer communities.

When people are involved in caring for their community and have personal relationships with others in the community, it reinforces their responsibility to treat others as they would like to be treated and help others. Citizens are more likely to support the rule of law when educated as to its existence and personally involved to ensure its success. Community involvement is not only beneficial for the community members in the present, but it is highly constructive in regards to modeling responsible behavior and good character to the younger generation. It is exceptionally important for citizens to encourage, and model, good citizenship. This is one of our most important responsibilities as citizens and community members. It is inconceivable to have a properly functioning democratic system without committed and responsible citizens.

Our job is to be citizens of integrity, who hold up the backbone of our democracy. We need to fulfill our moral obligations as citizens, as well as fulfill those we are legally bound to by law. Our role in society is among the most important, and we must take it seriously. We are responsible for the care and preservation of our society, and as citizens, we have an ethical responsibility to do so. This can include putting selfish goals aside and working towards goals that would improve the community at large. It means doing the right things even when it is hard. Investing in others, and helping people to achieve more, benefits all by leading to the improvement of citizen led communities.

First Place Huda Haque Morrisville, NC



Huda Haque is a senior at Panther Creek High School in Cary, NC. Her favorite subjects are biology, English, and history. Huda is interested in English and public health on a federal level. She enjoys reading, politics, Science Olympiad, and volunteering in her community.

Remembering Responsibility: The Duty of an American

When the Founding Fathers penned America's Constitution, the primary intention of the United States was to grant unalienable rights to its people in the face of monarchical rule. While this more passive aspect of American citizenship is undeniable, the active responsibilities of citizens have characterized the nation's tenacity and devotion to the rule of law. This principle is the same reflected in John F. Kennedy's famous inaugural call to action, and it is the same one that has continued to reinforce the rule of law in America.

Perhaps the most obvious responsibilities of citizenship are the mandatory ones. Americans are required to pay their taxes, serve on a jury if summoned, register with the Selective Service, and overall, obey all federal and local laws. Adhering to these basic requirements of citizenship not only permits a basic level of peace, but it also promotes equal coordination amongst all Americans. [1] In doing so, citizens prove the efficiency of laws that exercise power uniformly in lieu of a single authority when it comes to maintaining society.

Yet, the voluntary responsibilities of citizens also reinforce the rule of law in an even more robust manner, especially when they are

denied to certain Americans. The duty of voting, since the establishment of the country, has been fought for by groups such as women and African Americans. For decades, this responsibility was not designated to many Americans, even as they lived as full citizens in their country. However, this duty's roots were found in the basic ideals of democracy, as well as the rule of law, seeing as democracy strives to uphold the equality of all citizens in the representation it offers. Many women such as Alice Paul and Lucy Burns saw their denial to vote as a denial of their status as Americans who contributed to the country. [2] Additionally, African Americans, who had been robbed of their 15th Amendment rights as the South circumvented the Amendment with poll taxes and grandfather clauses, were similarly outraged, with one Georgian in the 1930s stating that he had "never voted in [his] life", [and had] never been able to express [his] right as a citizen because of the poll tax". [3] The fact that it was not a mere accessory, but rather an obligation that was being taken away, propelled groups to reinforce the rule of law through activism and protest. Paul and Burns faced imprisonment, physical assault, damaging force-feeding, and more in order to push the women's suffrage movement on a national scale, their efforts eventually culminating in increased equality before the law through the 19th Amendment. [2] Additionally, African-Americans and organizations, including Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, withstood racist, violent attacks to pressure Congress into passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a step towards the elimination of discrimination (via the banning of literacy tests and poll taxes) against a large portion of citizens under the law. [4] Therefore, the presence of the voting responsibility eventually led to a more just rule of law.

Additionally, another onus of citizenship lies within furthering the common good for a community. The concept of a common good may be defined as the achievement of ideals such as happiness and justice for all. A recent example of this duty being carried out can be seen in activism for same-sex marriage. The right to marriage and a publicly recognized relationship can easily be classified as one afforded by the common good, yet court cases like *Baker v. Nelson*, which upheld the denial of a marriage license to a gay couple, the

passage of anti-LGBTQ marriage in over half of the country, the 1993 Don't Ask Don't Tell Bill (DADT), which prevented LGBTQ members of the military from serving openly, and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) which defined marriage as being only between a man and a woman, obstructed this notion for many. [5] As it is the responsibility of citizens to actively pursue the common good for all, many Americans took to the streets in order to challenge this lack of basic rights. In the face of increasing pushback from both major political parties, activists ignored the idea that the rights of LGBTQ Americans were simply for states to decide, and in March of 2009, hundreds of thousands of Americans carried out their responsibility by protesting. [6] The event no doubt resulted in a ripple effect, the main one being that the matter of LGBTQ rights became one of greater importance on the national scale, not an issue to be overlooked. In fact, soon after, both DADT and DOMA were deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, and on June 26th, 2015, same-sex marriage was legalized in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. [5] Clearly, the matter of LGBTQ rights in America was pursued due to an obligation on behalf of its citizens, and as a result, people under the law were held to equal levels of dignity and justice.

To be an American citizen allows a person to enjoy many rights, yet the responsibilities of this citizenship are similarly crucial for ensuring the strength of American law. Primarily, these commitments serve to create a society that may enjoy equity, and in doing so, they ultimately reinforce the rule of law by making it exercise a righteous amount of power upon citizens. When observing the relationship between the commitment of an American and the law, it is also pivotal to keep in mind the many Americans who have both dedicated and sacrificed their lives in the name of strengthening this relationship for future generations of citizens, citizens who must never take these responsibilities lightly themselves.

Bibliography

1. Becky Beaupre Gillespie, et al. "Why Do People Obey the Law?" *University of Chicago Law School*, 13 January 2015, www.law.uchicago.edu/news/why-do-people-obey-law#:~:text=Your%20reason%20to%20obey%20the,people%20to%20update%20their%20behavior.
2. Michals, Debra. "Alice Paul." *National Women's History Museum*, www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/alice-paul.
3. "Voting Rights for African Americans." *The Library of Congress*, The Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/elections/right-to-vote/voting-rights-for-african-americans/.
4. "Voting Rights Act of 1965." *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute*, 5 June 2018, kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/voting-rights-act-1965.
5. "Gay Marriage." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 9 June 2017, www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/gay-marriage#section_1.
6. Peters, Jeremy W. "Gay Rights Marchers Press Cause in Washington." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 11 Oct. 2009, www.nytimes.com/2009/10/12/us/politics/12protest.html.

United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit

THE HONORABLE ROGER L. GREGORY
Chief Judge

THE HONORABLE J. HARVIE WILKINSON III

THE HONORABLE PAUL V. NIEMEYER

THE HONORABLE DIANA GRIBBON MOTZ

THE HONORABLE WILLIAM B. TRAXLER, JR.

THE HONORABLE ROBERT B. KING

THE HONORABLE DENNIS W. SHEDD

THE HONORABLE G. STEVEN AGEE

THE HONORABLE BARBARA MILANO KEENAN

THE HONORABLE JAMES ANDREW WYNN

THE HONORABLE ALBERT DIAZ

THE HONORABLE HENRY F. FLOYD

THE HONORABLE STEPHANIE D. THACKER

THE HONORABLE PAMELA A. HARRIS

THE HONORABLE JULIUS N. RICHARDSON

THE HONORABLE A. MARVIN QUATTLEBAUM, JR.

THE HONORABLE ALLISON JONES RUSHING