



Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division
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Court Announces Finalists in Student Bill of Rights Contest

Today the court announced three students from the Northern District of Illinois who were selected as finalists in the first Bill of Rights Contest hosted by the U.S. Courts for the 7th and 8th Circuits.

2020 Finalists

- Elon Stokes, video, 3rd grade (Elementary, K-5th), <https://youtu.be/QdtStf60ldc>
- Elizabeth Morrissey, poem, 7th grade, St. Michael School, Orland Park (Middle School, 6th-8th), [https://www.ilnd.uscourts.gov/assets/events/What Does the Bill of Rights Mean to Me.pdf](https://www.ilnd.uscourts.gov/assets/events/What%20Does%20the%20Bill%20of%20Rights%20Mean%20to%20Me.pdf)
- Emilio Soto, essay, 9th grade, De La Salle Institute, Chicago (High School, 9th-12th), [https://www.ilnd.uscourts.gov/assets/events/Bill of Rights Final Essay.pdf](https://www.ilnd.uscourts.gov/assets/events/Bill%20of%20Rights%20Final%20Essay.pdf)

“Thank you to all participating students in the Northern District of Illinois. Your thoughtful and creative submissions demonstrated understanding of and enthusiasm for the Bill of Rights,” said Chief Judge Rebecca R. Pallmeyer.

In October 2020, kindergarten through twelfth grade students residing in the Northern District of Illinois were invited to submit an essay, poem, video, photograph, song, or piece of art on the importance of the Bill of Rights in celebration of the anniversary of the Bill of Rights. Each district winner was awarded a \$50 gift card and the chance to compete for cash prizes up to \$500 against finalists from other courts within the 7th and 8th Circuits.

Northern District of Illinois elementary finalist Elon Stokes went on to win second place among entries in the 7th and 8th Circuits (Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota) in the elementary school category. For this, Stokes won a \$200 cash prize.

The general public and contest participants were invited to join a virtual Bill of Rights Family Event on December 2 to learn from federal judges and attorneys about the Bill of Rights in action. U.S. District Judge Steven C. Seeger and U.S. Magistrate Judge M. David Weisman, both of the Northern District of Illinois, were among the judges who presented to students.

The contest and family event were sponsored by the U.S. Courts of Appeals for the Seventh and Eighth Circuits, and the U.S. Districts Courts in Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The Northern District of Illinois Court Historical Association donated to the event. U.S. Magistrate Judge Beth W. Jantz, Northern District of Illinois, and attorneys Chris Chasin and Arielle Williams reviewed contest submissions.

December 15 is recognized as Bill of Rights Day. The Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments of the Constitution, spell out our individual rights as Americans and the limits on government power.

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