



Americans Against Gun Violence
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Announcement of our 2024 National High School Essay Contest

Open to All U.S. High School Students

With at least \$15,000 in Total Scholarship Awards

Note: The deadline to enter the contest is Saturday, April 20, 2024.

- **Essay Topic**
- To enter the 2024 Americans Against Gun Violence National High School Essay Contest, students must submit an original essay of 500 words or fewer describing their thoughts about the following excerpt from the Americans Against Gun Violence mission statement:

“In creating constitutional obstacles, where none previously existed, to the adoption of stringent gun control laws in the United States comparable to the laws in other high income democratic countries, the Supreme Court’s 2008 *Heller* decision and its progeny are literally death sentences for tens of thousands of Americans annually.”

The full mission statement is posted on the home page of the Americans Against Gun Violence website.

- In describing their thoughts about the essay contest prompt, students don’t necessarily need to endorse the statement or refute it, although they may do so if they wish. Other aspects of the prompt that a student may wish to address include:
 - How does the essay contest prompt compare with what you’ve learned about the Second Amendment and/or the *Heller* decision from other sources, including teachers, parents, elected officials, the popular media, the gun lobby, other gun violence prevention organizations, etc.?
 - Does the essay contest prompt stimulate you to learn more about the history of the Second Amendment and/or court decisions concerning the scope of the Second Amendment?
 - Have you actually read the *Heller* decision and/or other related court decisions yourself, and if so, what’s your own impression of the decision(s)?
 - Why do you think that some people and some organizations might be reluctant or afraid to challenge the commonly held view that the Second

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Amendment was intended to confer an individual right to own guns unrelated to service in a “well regulated militia.”

- Does the essay contest prompt stimulate you to learn more about the differences between gun control laws in the United States and the laws in other high income democratic countries?
 - Does the essay contest prompt stimulate you to think more about what might be the main causes of our country’s extraordinarily high rate of gun violence – including the high number of school shootings – and what are the definitive measures needed to stop our country’s epidemic of gun violence?
 - What role do you think that you and other high school students can play in helping to stop our country’s epidemic of gun violence, including school shootings?
- **Contest Eligibility and Rules**
 - Contestants must be high school students in good standing attending school in the United States or its territories.
 - Students who entered high school on track to graduate in 2024 but who graduated early are also eligible.
 - Americans Against Gun Violence Board members, employees, and paid consultants and their first and second degree relatives are not eligible. Students who have worked as summer interns with Americans Against Gun Violence on an independent contractor basis and who are still in high school are eligible.
 - Students are encouraged to access information posted on the Americans Against Gun Violence website, including, in particular, information on the [Facts and FAQ's](#) and [Links to Other Resources](#) pages, among other resource materials, and to discuss the essay topic with teachers, parents, friends, and other mentors; but students must write their essays themselves, in their own words. Essays that are largely or entirely computer generated will not be considered for scholarship awards.
 - Students who are under the age of 18 must have the consent of a parent or legal guardian to enter the contest.
 - **To enter the contest, students must submit their essays and demographic information via the online entry system link posted on the [High School Essay Contest page of the Americans Against Gun Violence website.](#)**
 - Essays may include a title and footnotes, but these elements are not required. If titles and footnotes are included, they don’t count toward the 500 word limit.
 - Only one essay will be considered per student. If a student submits more than one essay, the most recent submission will be the one that is considered.
 - The deadline to enter the contest is 11:59 PM in the student’s own time zone on Saturday, April 20, 2024. Late entries will not be accepted unless the lateness was caused by a malfunction of the Americans Against Gun Violence online entry system.
 - **Selection of Contest Winners**
 - A minimum of twelve contest winners will be selected from the essays submitted.

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- The Americans Against Gun Violence Board of Directors will establish a panel of reviewers to rate essays based on accuracy, originality, clarity, cohesiveness, and overall impact.
- Essay reviewers will be blinded to all student identifying information.
- Contest winners will be notified by email by Monday, May 20, 2024.
- At the time that students are notified that they've been chosen as contest winners, they'll also be sent a signature form that includes the following elements:
 - A statement that the essay submitted is the student's own original work
 - A statement signed by a parent or legal guardian, if the student is under age 18, confirming that the parent or guardian approves of the student's participation in the essay contest
 - A statement by a school official confirming that the contestant is a high school student in good standing or that the student entered high school on track to graduate in 2024 but graduated early
- In order to receive a scholarship award, students must return the signed signature forms within 30 days of being notified that they are contest winners.
- **Scholarship Awards (Total of at least \$15,000)**
 - Scholarship awards will be sent to essay contest winners with the understanding that the awards will be used to pay for future qualified expenses that lead to a college degree or a professional certification in a recognized occupation, in accordance with IRS guidelines for non-taxable scholarships.
 - Scholarship awards will be sent in the form of a check by U.S. mail to the home address listed on the students' entry forms within five business days of receipt of winners' completed signature forms.
 - The first place winner will be sent a check for a \$3,000 scholarship award; second place a \$2,500 award; and third place a \$2,000 award.
 - The fourth through tenth ranked winners will each be sent \$1,000 awards, and the 11th and 12th ranked winners will each be sent \$250 awards.
 - If any of the students chosen as one of the top 12 winners don't submit their completed signature forms within 30 of being notified, their awards may be given to other lower ranked student entrants.
 - Americans Against Gun Violence reserves the option of also offering additional scholarship awards of \$100 each to students not ranked in the top 12 if the essay contest reviewers feel that their essays merit such awards. (In past years, up to 20 additional \$100 awards have been offered.)
- **Publication of Essays and Release of Students' Names and High School Affiliations**
 - By entering the contest, students agree to allow Americans Against Gun Violence to publish their essays in part or in whole in any way that the Board of Directors deems to be appropriate, but without the students' names, high school affiliations, or other identifying information.
 - When the contest winners are notified that they have been chosen to receive awards, they will be provided with forms to indicate whether they would like to have their names and/or high school affiliations released in association with their essays. Americans Against Gun Violence will not publish the students' names and/or high school affiliations without the written consent of the student, and, if the student is under 18 year of age, the consent of a parent or guardian.

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- ***Summary of Essay Contest Timeline***
 - The deadline for entering the contest is 11:59 PM in the student's own time zone on Saturday, April 20, 2024.
 - The students selected as winners will be notified by Monday, May 20, 2024.
 - Students chosen as contest winners must return completed signature forms within 30 days of being notified that they have been chosen as winners in order to receive their monetary awards.
 - Scholarship award checks will be mailed to the winners upon receipt of their completed signature forms.

For additional information or questions, please email essaycontest@aagunv.org or call (916) 668-4160.