



Americans Against Gun Violence
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Announcement of our 2025 National High School Essay Contest

Open to All U.S. High School Students

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

- **Essay Topic**

- To enter the 2025 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 late Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas's opinion in the 1972 case of [Adams v. Williams](#):

A powerful lobby dins into the ears of our citizenry that these gun purchases are constitutional rights protected by the Second Amendment, which reads, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

There is under our decisions no reason why stiff state laws governing the purchase and possession of pistols may not be enacted....There is no reason why all pistols should not be barred to everyone except the police.ⁱ

- In describing their thoughts about the essay contest prompt, students don't necessarily need to endorse Justice Douglas's opinion or refute it, although they may do so if they wish. Other aspects of the prompt that students may wish to address include:
 - How does the essay contest prompt and/or other information posted on the Americans Against Gun Violence website compare with what you've previously learned about the proper interpretation of the Second Amendment?
 - Does the essay contest prompt stimulate you to learn more about the history of the Second Amendment and/or court decisions concerning the proper interpretation of the Amendment?
 - Does the essay contest prompt stimulate you to learn more about the differences between gun control laws and rates of gun violence in the United States and the laws and rates of gun violence in other countries?

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- What effect does gun violence have on you and other U.S. children and youth, and what role do you think that you and other young people in our country can play in helping to stop our country's epidemic of gun violence?

- **Contest Eligibility and Rules**
 - Contestants must be current high school students attending school in the United States or its territories, or students who entered high school on track to graduate in 2025 but who graduated early.
 - Americans Against Gun Violence Board members, employees, and paid consultants and their first and second degree relatives are not eligible.
 - Students are encouraged to access information posted on the Americans Against Gun Violence website, including 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; and if included, titles and footnotes 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 19, 2025. Late entries will not be accepted unless the delay 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.
 - The Americans Against Gun Violence Board of Directors will establish a panel of reviewers to choose contest winners based on the accuracy, originality, clarity, cohesiveness, and overall impact of the essays.
 - Essay reviewers will be blinded to all student identifying information.
 - Contest winners will be notified by email by Monday, May 19, 2025.
 - At the time that students are notified that they've been chosen as contest winners, they'll also be sent a signature form via email 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

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- 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 2025 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 have been chosen as 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 days of being notified, their awards may be divided among other student winners.
 - 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 distributed per year.)
- **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.
 - Signature forms sent to contest winners will include an optional section that students can complete if they wish to have their names and/or their high school affiliations published along with their essays. Americans Against Gun Violence will not publish students' names and/or high school affiliations or release any other student identifying or contact information without the written consent of the student, and, if the student is under 18 years of age, the written consent of a parent or guardian.
- **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 19, 2025.
 - The students selected as winners will be notified by Monday, May 19, 2025.
 - Students chosen as contest winners must return completed signature forms within 30 days of being notified that they have been chosen as winners.
 - Scholarship award checks will be mailed to the winners within five business days of receipt of their completed signature forms.

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

ⁱ Adams v. Williams, 407 US 143, 150 (Supreme Court 1972).