

NEWS FROM THE THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

December 10, 2024

Philadelphia – The Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee of the Judicial Council of the Third Circuit announced today that it is hosting an essay contest for elementary students focused on civics, citizenship, and the concept of “We the People” – which are the first three words of the Preamble to the United States Constitution. The essay prompt is: How did our Nation’s Founders envision ‘the People’ when they drafted the Constitution, and how should we interpret their vision in our country today?

The Third Judicial Circuit is comprised of the U.S. Court of Appeals as well as the Federal District Courts of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The latter are trial courts, which include bankruptcy courts. Chief Circuit Judge Michael A. Chagares noted that “It is incumbent on us, as federal judges, to engage with our youth and to offer a robust civics education program.” The Committee and its members are partnering with bar associations, civic organizations, and educational institutions across the geographical reach of the Third Circuit to promote and oversee the essay contest.

The essay may be written by either an individual student or by an entire class. If a class essay, students within a participating class should work together to write the essay. That means that only one essay is submitted on behalf of the Class. Individual and class essays must be submitted on or before Monday, March 31, 2025. The best individual and class essays in each district (District of Delaware, District of New Jersey, Eastern District

of Pennsylvania, Middle District of Pennsylvania, Western District of Pennsylvania, and the District of the Virgin Islands) of the Third Circuit will be invited to one of the nine courthouses in the Third Circuit to present their essays during the first weeks of May, in celebration of Law Day. The individual and class essays will be judged separately based on focus, content development, organization, and style. Prizes will be awarded.

Circuit Judge D. Brooks Smith, who chairs the Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee overseeing the contest, stated “Our Nation’s Founders regarded “the People” as the very heart and soul of a democracy. The republic that their work brought forth is one in which “the People” rule. Our committee hopes that this year’s theme will give students an opportunity to think about Americans from all walks of life and how their different life experiences combine to shape the dynamic country we all live in today.”

For more information about the essay contest, please visit the Third Circuit Court of Appeals website at <https://ca3ccrofl.powerappsportals.us/> or contact 267-299-4306.