

# WALLY BURNS MEMORIAL POST NO. 8077

## VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES HOMewood, ILLINOIS



Good afternoon, my name is Dave Darte. I am a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization. I currently serve the VFW as Illinois State Voice of Democracy Chairman. I hope you will allow me just a few minutes to talk to you about a contest. It is a program that the VFW and Auxiliary offers to High School and Elementary students across the Country. It is an essay contest open to all students grades 6-8 and 9-12. Every year a patriotic theme is chosen by the VFW National Commander in Chief. This year the theme for grades 6-8 will be "My Pledge to Our Veterans". The theme for students in grades 9-12 is "Why is the Veteran Important". The students should be given this information by the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of September. The deadline for the essays will be the 27<sup>th</sup> of October. The essays will be collected by the Post Chairperson (Marie Claydon) on Monday, October 31<sup>st</sup>.

The VFW greatly appreciates the difficult task that teachers and Administrators have developing curriculum to prepare students for their future. We realize that it is particularly challenging because of the myriad of career choices that lie ahead for students. Regardless of the path they choose, however, one thing that students have in common is that, hopefully all, will become active U.S. Citizens. They will be the next generation of decision makers and leaders of our great country. Therefore, the VFW believes that students can benefit from this contest which encourages them to ponder the rich heritage of freedoms that they enjoy and to begin to formulate their role in preserving and advancing those freedoms. The VOD Contest incorporates both academic and good citizenship instruction. In addition, I believe most would agree that learning to effectively organize and communicate their ideas and beliefs is a skill that will serve students well in all walks of life.

Schools, teachers and students receive favorable recognition from local media for their participation in the program and the students could win scholarships and cash prizes. There are four District and State levels, as well as a national level. Prizes vary for local and district contests. Illinois State prizes for 17 district winners range from \$300-\$2500 and an all-expense weekend trip to Springfield or students and family. National awards for State Winners range from \$1000-\$35,000 and a very memorable trip to Washington DC.

The Voice of Democracy Contest is approved by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and fits well into a variety of core academic curriculums.

I hope you will consider participating in this valuable program. You can learn complete rules and more by visiting [vfw.com](http://vfw.com). A more specific web address will follow. The video that follows, features a brief slide show of photos taken during the Annual State Awards weekend and an impromptu interview with last year's Illinois State VOD winner.

Thank you so much for your time today and all you do to educate our nation's youth.

<https://vfw.org/community/youth-and-education/youth-scholarships>.

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