

National Essay Contest Rules

Eligibility

- Contestants must be United States citizens under the age of 26 at the time of essay submission.
- Submissions must be received by 11:59 PM EST on Tuesday, February 17, 2026.
- One submission per contestant.

Theme

- The theme for this year's contest is "Biblical Citizenship."
- Essays should examine what it means to live faithfully as citizens of both heaven and earth, particularly when earthly laws or cultural norms conflict with God's commands. Students are invited to consider how allegiance to Christ shapes civic responsibility, how conscience and moral conviction safeguard true freedom, and/or how Biblical principles can renew the public square in our time.

Submission Guidelines

- Essays should be no longer than 800 words, but may be as short as 500 words.
- Essays should be written in an easily readable font size (11 or 12 pt.) with a professional font style (Times New Roman, Arial, etc.).
- All essays should be submitted as a .docx or a PDF document and should include your name as well as a title for your essay. Cover pages are acceptable but not necessary.
- Essays must be written in English.

Judging

- Essays will be judged on content, writing style, and overall impression. Make your essay interesting, compelling, and aligned with the theme.
- The judging panel is appointed by the Institute for Faith and Culture.

Notification

- The winner will be notified prior to Friday, February 27, 2026.
- The winning essay will be featured on the websites of the Institute for Faith & Culture.
- The winner will be invited to the Kingdom Come Conference, with all expenses paid, to participate in a live panel discussion on their essay topic.
- The winner will receive a \$500 cash prize.

Travel and Accommodations

- The Institute for Faith & Culture will cover airfare, ground transportation to and from the airport, and lodging for the contest winner.

Non-Partisan Policy

- The Institute for Faith & Culture is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) organization and does not endorse or oppose any candidate or political party.
- Essays should focus on the theme and avoid partisan content.

Contact

- For any questions, contact the Institute for Faith & Culture at info@instituteffc.org.