

Rules and Conditions

In recognition of the upcoming 250th anniversary of the United States, the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) is proud to launch WILL's "What America Means to Me" student contest, an initiative designed to encourage the next generation to engage and learn more about America's founding principles.

Consistent with WILL's mission to advance individual liberty and constitutional government, this contest invites students in kindergarten through 12th grade to submit a video to WILL which reflects on the meaning of freedom in their own lives. This contest is open to all public, charter, private, and homeschool students who are citizens of the United States and reside and attend school in Wisconsin. Relatives of employees or board members of WILL are not eligible to win.

Participants must submit an original 30 – 60 second video responding to one of the following prompt(s):

"What does freedom mean to you, and why is it important for America's future?"

"What are America's founding principles, and why do they still matter today?"

"What makes America a place of opportunity, and how can you help keep it that way?"

- Students should answer one of the above questions in their own words and may choose to include personal examples such as a freedom they value, an opportunity they have because they live in a free country, or how freedom helps them learn, speak, believe, or pursue their goals. Each Participant may submit only one video. Videos may include narration, interviews, artwork, animation, or any creative combination thereof.

Content Standards

- All content must be original and created by the Participant. AI-generated videos are not permitted. Plagiarism or unauthorized use of another person's work will result in immediate disqualification.
- No third-party music, images, or video clips may be used because of copyright concerns.
- Content must be appropriate for all ages.
- Entries must not contain commercial advertising or promotional content for any product, service, or business.
- Entries must not express political endorsements of any candidate for public office.
- If the video includes the image or voice of any person other than the Participant, the Participant must obtain written consent from that individual (or their parent/guardian if a minor) and include it with the submission.
- Participants are responsible for ensuring all persons appearing in their video are aware of and consent to public display of the entry.

Important Dates

- Contest opens – May 19, 2026
- Submission Deadline – August 15, 2026
- Winners Announced – August 25, 2026

Evaluation Standards

To ensure fairness and transparency, submissions will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Clarity of message: Does the student clearly address the prompt?
- Conceptual understanding: Does the response show an age-appropriate understanding of freedom, civic ideas, and (when relevant) the founding principles of America?
- Connection to experience or ideas: Does the student connect the prompt to a personal example, observation, or reflection?
- Originality: Is the submission authentic and clearly the student's own work?
- Presentation: Is the video engaging, well-delivered, and within the time guidelines?

Cash Prizes

To recognize outstanding entries, WILL will recognize the top three submissions with cash prizes:

- First Place: \$2,026
- Second Place: \$776
- Third Place: \$250

The winning 1st place student and their parents/guardians will receive free tickets to WILL's annual celebration dinner where the winner will be announced in front of our organization's supporters.

Rights and Intellectual Property

- By submitting an entry, participants (and their parent/guardian) grant WILL a non-exclusive, royalty-free, perpetual license to display, screen, broadcast, publish, and share all entered videos — in whole or in part — for purposes related to the contest, the 250th Anniversary, and WILL's mission. This includes use on WILL's website, social media channels, press materials, and future educational programs.
- WILL will credit Participants by first name and last initial (e.g., "Kristin M., Grade 8) whenever the video is publicly displayed.
- WILL will not sell or license entries to any third-party commercial entity.
- A signed parent or guardian release and consent form (in the form attached hereto) is required for all Participants, granting WILL permission to use submitted videos for educational, promotional, and public discourse purposes. All participants understand that WILL may keep and use the videos without compensation other than the cash prize listed above.

Privacy and Publicity

- By entering, Participants agree that WILL may use their first name, last initial, grade level, and school name for promotional, educational, and press purposes related to the contest.
- WILL will not publicly disclose Participant's full names, home addresses, phone numbers, or other personally identifiable information without express written consent.
- Winners may be asked to participate in a brief press interview or photo opportunity for contest promotion. Participation is voluntary.

General Conditions

- These rules and conditions constitute the entire agreement between Participants and WILL regarding this contest.
- WILL is not responsible for any injury, loss, or damage of any kind arising from participation in this contest or the acceptance or use of any prize.
- By participating, Participants agree to release, discharge, and hold harmless WILL its officers, directors, employees, and volunteers from any and all liability related to the contest.
- If any provision of these rules is deemed invalid, the remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect.

Questions and Contact Information

For questions about the contest, please contact:

Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty

info@will-law.org

Suggested Subject Line: Contest Question

Questions submitted by August 1 will receive a response before the submission deadline.

Questions and answers of general interest may be posted on the contest website.

WILL's "What America Means to Me" Kids Contest aims to highlight student voices, promote civic understanding, and foster appreciation for the enduring principles of liberty as we approach this historic milestone.