

Hello Post Oratorical Chair and Commander,

A quick note about the High School Oratorical Contest. Yes, the oratorical contest will proceed this year. While we must operate within the bounds and limitations set by the Governor's newest guidance (at the time of this writing, Executive Order #72) limiting gatherings to 10 people or less. We must limit all contest to only those Legionnaires running the contest and the student contestants plus one chaperone accompanying each contestant from their home to the contest and return.

Legionnaires running the contest we be expected to fill multiple roles within the contest to make it work. For example, the MC could do the introductions, the invocation, and the time keeping. We will need to be creative while maintaining a fair contest for all competitors.

Here is the updated timeline for contests for 2021:

*Post - December 2020 or Early January 2021 – if you have already completed your post level contest, forward your contestant and contact information to the District Chair at t2p2.terri@gmail.com

*District – Sunday, 24 January 2021 at Post 10 – start time is dependent upon number of contestants. Look to arrive NLT 0830.

*Northern Region – Saturday, 20 February 2021 at Rapidan Baptist Church, 150 Rapidan Church Rd, Madison, VA with contest start at 1000.

*Department – Saturday, March 06, 2021 – Colonial Heights Post 284, start time 1100, plan to arrive by 1000.

*National - April 9-11, 2021, Indianapolis.

Concerning the Department contest, I received word from the National Headquarters that department contests must be in-person events, no virtual events. The top student must have competed in an in-person event at the department level or else he/she is not eligible to advance to the national competition in April. No exceptions.

We are reminded that contest below the Department and National contest can depart from the rules offered in the contest guidelines put out by National so you can tweak your post contests. We will be tweaking the district contest to make it work while maintaining a safe environment and in line with the Governor's Exec Order.

The following was originally provided from National as we set out to hold contests under the COVID pandemic limitations. This was prior to Executive Order #72.

It is very important that all contests at all levels be conducted in an environment which adheres strictly to COVID protocols:

- Social distancing must be practiced at all times. The only exception is immediate family members (mom, dad, siblings) who may sit side-by-side, but all others six feet apart or more.
- Masks should be worn over both the mouth and nose from when a person enters the building until the time they depart the building, no exceptions. People who fail to follow this requirement should be asked to depart the contest area.
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available for people to use. Also, all areas that people are likely to touch (table tops, chairs, door knobs, etc.) should be sanitized before people begin to arrive for the competition.
- Students will be kept in separate rooms if possible. If space is not available for this option, they will be kept at least six feet apart.
- Students will present their orations with their mask removed at least 15-20 feet away from others such as audience members and contest time keepers. They will wear a mask until they are ready to begin their oration. When they are finished with their oration, they will put their mask back on.
- Consider foregoing social gatherings before the competition begins and after it ends. Social distancing is difficult to enforce in such environments. If food and drinks are made available, consider offering food items in prepackaged containers assembled under sanitary conditions and drinks in individual-sized plastic bottles.
- The guidelines above may seem excessive to some, but it is the contest chairperson's responsibility to ensure the contest is conducted in a COVID-safe environment for all.

For the District contest, we will be using technology so families and others who wish to view are able to watch and support their contestants. We will run on a skeleton crew on site. We will have 3 judges and the rest will be based on the number of contestants. So, with the 10 person limitation, you can see how quickly we will be at capacity. Please get your information to us ASAP. Negative replies are required.

Thanks!

Terri Puckett, District Commander
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The American Legion
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