



NEWS RELEASE

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NCSC names Arizona, Florida and Virginia students as top Civics Education Essay Contest winners

Williamsburg, Va. (April 28, 2016) – Taylor Stryker, a fifth-grader at Walsingham Academy Lower School in Williamsburg, Virginia, Camryn Trabue, a seventh-grader at Sawgrass Springs Middle School in Coral Springs, Florida, and Kaileigh Thompson, a ninth-grader at Benson High School in Benson, Arizona, are the first place winners of the National Center for State Courts' (NCSC) 2016 Civics Education Essay Contest, held to recognize Law Day, May 1. Contest entries were divided into three age categories: third to fifth grade, sixth to eighth grade, and ninth to twelfth grade. Each age group was asked – “In your own words, what are the Miranda Rights and why are they important?”

NCSC received 317 entries representing 13 states. Before judging, students' names, schools, and the representative states were removed from the entries. Judges were District Court Judge (Ann Arbor, Michigan) Elizabeth Hines, a member of the NCSC Board of Directors, and Annette Boyd-Pitts, executive director of the Florida Law Related Education Association. Ms. Boyd-Pitts was the 2014 recipient of NCSC's Sandra Day O'Connor Award for the Advancement of Civics Education.

Second and third place winners:

- 3rd – 5th grade: Daniel Zilla and Anne Barry from Walsingham Academy Lower School in Williamsburg, Va., received second and third place, respectively.
- 6th – 8th grade: Annabel Tremps from Piney Grove Middle School in Cumming, Georgia, won second place; and Valentina Celis from Sawgrass Springs Middle School in Coral Springs, Florida, is the third place winner.

- 9th – 12th grade: Alexa Evanoff from McDowell High School in Erie, Pennsylvania, received second place; and Rebecca Townley from Marian High School in Omaha, Nebraska, is the third place winner.

[Read the winning essay entries here.](#)

The winning essays were selected based on accuracy, originality, and creativity. Judge Hines described ninth-grade winner Thompson's essay as "a very clear, well-written, and accurate statement. It's exactly what the Miranda Rights are!" Judge Hines and Boyd-Pitts unanimously voted for fifth-grader Stryker's essay as the first place winner in the 3rd-5th grade category, but said it's important to iterate Miranda Rights not only protect the innocent, they protect everyone in custody during police interrogations. Judge Hines and Boyd-Pitts considered the 6th-8th grade category the most challenging to judge, but awarded seventh-grader Trabue top honors because she addressed people from other countries residing in the United States. Trabue stated the Miranda Rights are "important because someone without civics knowledge, like immigrants and refugees, wouldn't know their civil liberties."

Law Day 2016 celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Miranda Rights, one of the most well-known U.S. Supreme Court cases – *Miranda v Arizona*. The Miranda warning is the warning given by law enforcement to criminal suspects in custody before they are interrogated to ensure suspects understand they have a Constitutional right to remain silent and not incriminate themselves.

The National Center for State Courts, headquartered in Williamsburg, Va., is a nonprofit court organization dedicated to improving the administration of justice by providing leadership and service to the state courts. Founded in 1971 by the Conference of Chief Justices and Chief Justice of the United States Warren E. Burger, NCSC provides education, training, technology, management, and research services to the nation's state courts.