

Westfield-West Springfield Lodge of Elks #1481
56 Franklin Street
Westfield MA 01085
(413) 562-5962

October 20, 2026

Dear Educator:

It is my pleasure to announce the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Americanism Essay Contest. The contest gives students in four separate grade levels, grades 5-8, the opportunity to thoughtfully evaluate and express their views on the selected annual theme - this year's being, "Explain a Constitutional Right or Privilege and How It Affects You and Your Family."

Americanism is always forefront in the minds of Elks; and, this contest is vitally important to us, as it promotes Americanism in our local communities, and encourages our young people to thoughtfully consider American values and appreciate the blessings and responsibilities of citizenship.

The contest starts at the local level, and then progresses through district and state levels, before ending with the naming of our National Winners in July, 2027. As the contest unfolds at the local and state competition, there are monetary awards for the top three essayists from each grade level. Nationally, the first-place, second-place and third-place authors in each division will receive awards of \$1,000, \$500, and \$250 respectively. All participants will receive a Certificate of Participation. Last year, at the Massachusetts Elks State Convention, our lodge was very proud to have our own Teagan Wapner from West Springfield named as our state third place winner for grade 5, and her essay forwarded to the National level of competition.

We hope that you will encourage your students to participate. By reaching out to you, it is our hope that perhaps your social studies classes can work it into their curriculum so that the whole class can participate. It is also a great opportunity for team teaching with the English Language Arts teachers to work on composition and grammar, which are strongly considered as part of the judging process.

I have enclosed a flyer with all the pertinent information, which you can provide to your teachers, or to your parents should your students not be participating as a class. I have also included the Essay Contest Cover Sheet. This must be attached to every essay submitted.

If you have any questions regarding the contest, or how to be involved, please reach out to me via email at connorp1749@comcast.net.

Sincerely,

Patricia O'Connor, Americanism Chair
Westfield-West Springfield Lodge of Elks #1481