Dear Classroom Teacher-

It is time for the annual Elks Americanism Essay contest. I hope the theme this year generates thoughtful essays. Please share the information with your students. I have had some teachers decide to have their entire class participate.

The monetary awards for EACH grade level (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th) are as follows:

Hutchinson Lodge - **$50** for the top three winners
Central District - **$100** for the top three Winners
MN State - **$100** for 3rd place, **$200** for 2nd place, **$300** for 1st place
National - **$250** for 3rd place, **$500** for 2nd place, **$1000** for 1st place

The attached file (ElksAmericanismEssayContest26-27) contains more information. The **cover sheet** (page 2) MUST be attached to each essay. Page 3 of the file can be printed and displayed to announce the contest on information boards. If you have questions, call me at: 320-333-7223. Please send the essays to the Hutchinson Elks Lodge 2427, ATTN: Tim Gratke, at 720 Hwy. 7 East, PO Box 272, Hutchinson, MN 55350 by the December 15th deadline. Scans of essays and all required forms can also be sent electronically attached to an email to brickyard_tim@msn.com.

Thank you for your willingness to promote this essay contest.

Tim Gratke – Americanism Co-Chair
Traci Atkinson – Americanism Co-Chair
Hutchinson Elks Lodge #2427

**FYI – One essay submitted to Hutchinson Lodge won Central District, MN State and went on to the National competition two years ago.

2026-2027 Elks Americanism Essay Contest

Theme: "Explain a Constitutional Right or Privilege and How It Affects You and Your Family."

(Explain how just one right or privilege affects you and your family.)

A program of the Elks' Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee, this contest is geared towards students in 5th through 8th grades to promote patriotism among young people.

CRITERIA:

1. Eligible participants must be a student enrolled in the fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth grade during the normal 2026-27 school year, preceding June 30, 2027.
2. Essay length cannot exceed 300 words.
3. Essay must be typed or legibly printed in ink. Also, Essay must be submitted as written (or typed) by the entrant.
4. Essay must be submitted for judging to the Elks Lodge administering the contest at his or her school or, if unknown, to the Lodge nearest to the home address of the entrant.
5. Entrant must be identified on essay by name, home address, grade, school attended and sponsoring Lodge. (Lodge may enter Lodge information on essay cover sheet.)
6. Judging criteria:
   - Originality: Avoid the use of trite or worn-out words and phrases — 30 points
   - Development of theme: Stay focused on ideas and thoughts. Don't ramble — 40 points
   - Mechanics and neatness: Use proper spelling, grammar and punctuation — 30 points
7. **Deadline: Must be submitted to Local Lodge by December 15, 2026.**

AWARDS

Hutchinson Elks Lodge #2427 - $50 given to top three entries in each division.

Elks MN Central District - $100.00 given to top three entries in each division

MN State Elks Association - 1st Place - $300; 2nd Place - $200; 3rd Place - $100

**First Place entries in each MN State division will be sent to the Elks National contest. Winners in each division will receive the following monetary awards:

Elks National - 1st Place - $1000; 2nd Place - $500; 3rd Place - $250

Sponsoring Elks Lodge: Hutchinson Elks Lodge #2427
Address: 720 Hwy. 7 E., PO Box 272, Hutchinson, MN 55350
Contact: Tim Gratke
Phone Number: 320-333-7223
E-mail: brickyard_tim@msn.com



Elks Care - Elks Share

GRAND LODGE
FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

VICTORIA WATSON
Administrator
Americanism Essay Contest

27 Churchill Drive
MILLVILLE, NJ, 08332-9413
C (856) 265-5559
njspvw22@gmail.com

July 2026

2026-2027 GRAND LODGE AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

CHALLENGING YOUNG, INQUISITIVE MINDS TO EXPLORE AMERICAN VALUES!

"Explain a Constitutional Right or Privilege and How It Affects You and Your Family."

The features introduced to the contest 4 years ago continue:

1) Four separate divisions for 5th, 6th, 7th & 8th grade students.

2) Awards for Each Grade Level — •$1,000 for 1st; •$500 for 2nd; •$250 for 3rd.

I am pleased to announce that the Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee has selected the theme, **"Explain a Constitutional Right or Privilege and How It Affects You and Your Family"** for the 2026-2027 Grand Lodge Americanism Essay Contest. The contest starts with the Local Lodges, progresses through District and State levels, and ends with the naming of our National Winners at the Grand Lodge Session in Denver, Colorado in July 2027. This 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.

Nationally, first-place, second-place and third-place authors in each division will receive monetary awards of $1,000, $500, and $250, respectively. Many Lodges, Districts and State Associations also provide various forms of recognition to their respective winners, and the Fraternal Committee appreciates and encourages their extraordinary efforts in support of the contest.

Contest materials, including the annual contest theme, are published online on May 1. Lodges are encouraged to communicate with school officials in a timely fashion to facilitate annual curriculum planning. Contest materials and a fillable Certificate of Participation for Lodge completion are located at: https://www.elks.org/grandlodge/fraternal/downloads.cfm.

This contest is vitally important to Elks as it promotes Americanism in our communities. It encourages 10-13 year old students to thoughtfully consider American values and appreciate the blessings and responsibilities of citizenship.

The Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee is committed to assisting you in promoting Americanism. Please let us know what we can do to be more helpful!

Victoria L Watson

Victoria Watson, *Administrator*
Americanism Essay Contest
Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee

2026-2027 AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST COVER SHEET

(MUST be attached to each Essay)

"Explain a Constitutional Right or Privilege and How It Affects You and Your Family."

Section 1 — to be filled out by student

(Circle or Highlight One Grade)

•Division I: 5th Grade •Division II: 6th Grade •Division III: 7th Grade •Division IV: 8th Grade

School _____ Teacher's Name _____

School Address _____ City _____ State _____

Student's Name _____ Male ☐ Female ☐ Age _____ Grade _____

Parent's Name _____ Phone (_____) _____
(used only to contact the winners)

Address _____ City _____ State ____ ZIP _____

E-mail _____

Send to Local Lodge no later than December 15, 2026.

Section 2 — to be filled out by Lodge Chairman

Chairman's Name Tim Gratke Phone Number (320) 333-7223

Sponsoring Lodge Name & Number Hutchinson Elks Lodge #2427

Address 720 Hwy. #7 East City Hutchinson State MN ZIP 55350

E-mail brickyard_tim@msn.com

Select the top three essays from each division and send them to the District Americanism Chairman by January 31, 2027 or the date established by the State Chairman. (Top three only, do not separate as 1st, 2nd, or 3rd.)

Section 3 — to be filled out by District Chairman

Chairman's Name _____ District _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ ZIP _____

Chairman's Phone Number (_____) _____ E-mail _____

Select the top three essays from each division and send them to the State Americanism Chairman by February 28, 2027 or the date established by the State Chairman. (Top three only, do not separate as 1st, 2nd, or 3rd.)

Section 4 — to be filled out by State Chairman

Chairman's Name _____ State _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ ZIP _____

Chairman's Phone Number (_____) _____ E-mail _____

Select the 1st, 2nd & 3rd place winners for your State and send the 1st place winner from each division to the Contest Administrator, Victoria Watson, by March 31, 2027.

AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

Sponsored by Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of The United States of America

THEME:

"Explain a Constitutional Right or Privilege and How It Affects You and Your Family."

RULES:

1. At the time of the contest, eligible participants must be students enrolled in one of these four divisions: **I**–5th grade; **II**–6th grade; **III**–7th grade; or **IV**–8th grade.
2. Essay length is not to exceed 300 words.
3. Essay must be typed or legibly printed in ink. Also, essay must be submitted as written (or typed) *by the entrant*.
4. Essay must be submitted for judging to the Elks Lodge nearest to the address of the entrant.
5. Participant must be identified by name, grade, school attending, and sponsoring Elks Lodge on the essay.

AWARDS:

Plaques will be awarded by Grand Lodge for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Place for national winning essays in Divisions I, II, III, and IV. Monetary awards will be disbursed for each grade level for 1st Place–$1,000; 2nd Place–$500; and 3rd Place–$250. Winners will be announced at the Grand Lodge Session in Denver, CO, July 4-7, 2027.

ENTRY DATE:

Essay should be submitted to local Elks Lodge on or before December 15, 2026.

The Essay Contest Cover Sheet must be completed for each level of competition and remain attached to the Essay.

Sponsoring Elks Lodge: Hutchinson, MN Elks Lodge No. 2427

Address: 720 Hwy. #7 East, Hutchinson, MN 55350-0272

Contact Person: Tim Gratke

Phone No. 320-333-7223

E-mail: brickyard_tim@msn.com