



LAW DAY  
2021 –  
“Advancing  
the Rule of  
Law – NOW!”

GRADES 9 – 12

ART, ESSAY AND POETRY  
CONTEST ENTRIES

# HELP TO JUDGE LAW DAY 2022 ENTRIES

If you are interested in scoring Law Day 2022 entries, please open the “Ballot Survey Form” attached to the email containing this Law Day PowerPoint slideshow.

In each category, please score each entry on a scale of 1 to 10. A score of 10 would be the highest score possible. A score of 1 would be the lowest score possible. Scores will be averaged for each entry.

Ballot survey forms must be received by midnight on April 28, 2022.

All scores will be averaged. The top three winners in each category will receive prizes and be recognized.

This contest is sponsored by the Monmouth Bar Association, the NJ State Bar Foundation and the IOLTA Fund.

# High School Poetry Contest (Grades 9-12)

## PROMPT:

Read “Freedom’s Plow” by Langston Hughes, a narrative poem which reflects on the Declaration of Independence.

Write a narrative poem that expresses your deepest thoughts on the U.S. Constitution. Try to include language from the Constitution.

## Entry #1 – Page 1

“All people were created equal”  
said the man who, with a metal grip, held  
many innocent people under his grasp  
It is a “moral depravity,”  
a blot on humanity’s face,  
yet still, the man went stoic on the subject of the slaves at his place

You see, even the core writer of the Constitution  
and the Declaration of Independence  
never thought that his workers deserved  
a ration of fair pay,  
something that the law prevents today.  
When they talked of the right of the man,  
they marginalize it to just that  
Many groups of people didn’t get their rights  
and still faced the consequences of others’ ignorance

“They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity.”  
Just as justice back in time was biased toward certain people  
Just as people thought that someone  
Who stood apart from them was  
Of lower standing than them.  
Even though brother and sisterhood connects all  
Past blood,  
Past color,  
Past all the things that differentiate you from me.

|  
That is the shortcoming.  
That a statement that affected so many  
was brazen enough, not to be true to its author,  
that the author shamed others who practiced the same acts as he.

Then again, the past is not the present  
just as yesterday is not today.  
But yesterday we have reflected,  
today we have changed

Just as the past has scarred our soil  
and marred our history  
with blatant reminders  
that people firmly believed that they were better because of something  
as shallow as their content of melanin,  
we seek today to plant and bring out new life  
and meaning to the past.  
Just as we step onto the soil  
we step onto the shoulders of giants  
who have brought our world from a barren cold place,  
to a world warm and fecund

Maybe it’s the past that has changed us  
the past that we regret  
the people we took for granted  
that carve us into the people that we are today  
the same people who carved the world,  
and passed on their plow

|  
from hand, to hand, to hand.

Just as my poem will pass onto you my feelings,  
just as my poem will pass onto you the pain in my heart  
to learn that sometimes the beliefs of those idolized  
are superficial,  
just as the law has taught me that people are equal,  
that the place I have in this world  
just as my predecessors,  
is equal to others

Just as the law has reformed to talk about world events and reflect  
the world we live is not the cookie-cutter that Jefferson templated  
The world we live in has been changed  
by our suffering and our pain,  
and our reflections on it.

Just as my parents have taught me  
Of the beauty that lies around and within the land where  
All people link arms  
Place their plows and shovels into the ground  
And together  
Build our land  
The beautiful land of the mixed.  
America.

We still have our voice,  
Some hoarse and deep, others loud and bawdy  
Those advocated for rights and liberties, others kept silent  
Our leaders and their inspirations leak into our dreams,  
Make us believe we are more than what we are made to be.  
Alas, no voice could ward off invisible enemies.  
People suffering, hardly breathing in hospital linens.  
Do they still have their voice?  
No, no. I don't believe they do.  
But, as all seemed to be lost,  
There was a light,  
And we were the ones who made it out of the dark.  
Now and then, we look at a companion and see them without a mask upon them.  
Their smile wide, eyes bright, voice booming out for all to hear,  
They remind us that those lost in the dark are not forgotten,  
Our friends, virtual coworkers, family members.  
Their voices prodded us forward, making us become more than what we were meant to be.  
Although their voices are now wisps in our memories,  
We still have our voice.

## Entry #3

*In 1787 we created a Constitution,*

*Yet still it doesn't mention anything about pollution.*

*So now we all need to add our contribution,*

*In order to secure our evolution.*

*It started out putting in place a system of government needing change,*

*There had been enough of the states in disarrange.*

*But soon a big central government would create great fear,*

*So a Bill of Rights would be implemented to make it adhere.*

*Individual rights needed to be protected,*

*Speech, guns, freedoms could not be neglected.*

*It was implemented in the new Congress' first session,*

*Time for an end to all the aggression.*

*But following the implementation there would be more need,*

*New wrongs to fix indeed.*

*So the Bill of Rights and Constitution would grow,*

*With new amendments and interpretations to know.*

*However the Constitution's faults still exist,*

*Still things we need to add to the checklist*

*Wrongs to be fixed and changes to be made,*

*Make the turnarounds so we don't need to be afraid.*

## Entry #4

### |The Forgotten Voices

Rising over the white horizon,  
A new identity shines  
The flag waves in the gentle wind  
An individual finds opportunity

June 21, 1788 marks the date  
The day of new beginnings  
A new government has blossomed  
And in its roots, democracy is established

Crafted with precise intent by the Founding Fathers,  
A paper outlines the basis of the government  
With enough fluidity to adapt to over time,  
The United States Constitution

Protected are the individuals  
Who form the basis of this nation  
Who the paper was written for  
Who delineate the frame of the United States

The shoe-maker is the protected individual  
The carpenter is the basis of this nation  
The merchant is who the paper was written for  
We the People delineate the frame of the United States

But not everybody shares this experience  
Not everybody is recognized the same;  
What about the voices that have been silenced for centuries?  
What about the forgotten voices?

Legally, minorities share in our citizenship  
But their lives are often riddled with fear and uncertainty  
These individuals fight for change  
They fight for a brighter tomorrow

The United States Constitution,  
Which has long portrayed the American Dream,  
Hear the voices of the oppressed crying  
*"We want change!"*



## Entry #5

In the US Constitution, there are a lot of rules

Never break these rules, or else you're a bunch of fools!

Didn't they say, "we the people"?

Excuse me? Did you forget the bald eagle?

People don't mean animals, where are they in the constitution?

Eagles have hearts too, don't they Susan!!!

Now, on a serious note, don't forget your rights

Do you see that flag flagging up there? We won that in fights.

Every American should have a pocket constitution, no?

Never go a day without reading your rights, your mind will grow!

Coming to the end of this amazing rap

Everyone read those 27 amendments, read it asap!

## Entry #6

### We Trust

TV on

The news is saying Russia doesn't know democracy

I couldn't help but be baffled by the hypocrisy

Doesn't matter if you vote or not, you see

Either way, all you get is presidential mediocrity

Two choices

No voices

Corrupt primaries

The plight of Mr. Sanders, how could we not remember

The poor man got screwed by media agenda

A system designed to ensure status quo

Bland options make the establishment go

Bananas, each party's candidate is moderate

But this thing has its root in the Constitution, let's not forget

Electoral college requires majority

There's just no space for three

So Congress makes a decision on the president to be

Party loyalty keeps royalty in power

Until it's gone, the college of the founding fathers will tower

Over the American people, and it devours

Any hope of democracy, so at this very hour

Let's remove what's meant to protect them from us

In the people, we trust

The clay creases into the wheel's base  
As they embrace the space to mold.  
The craftsmen's fingertips fold the clay,  
A display of things needed to be told.

Behold! A bowl of great structure and strength  
Beget from potters of years past.  
Our Founding Fathers, that is, crafted our country's clay  
For a more perfect union than the last.

Alas! With great might does not come perfection,  
Nor did they proclaim to attain it in their craft.  
As they laid a sturdy mold for our land's law,  
Our palms with the power to amend the draft.

78 years following its formation, its roughness seized the soles of slaves.  
The self-evident truths—yet to reach their palms,  
They fought for their escape.  
We the People saw the struggle,  
Their rightful desires of liberation.  
And so we lathered their shoes to right the wrongs  
With the clay of equality and emancipation.

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## Entry #7 –

Even so, We the People had not yet created a perfect union.

132 years following its formation, the rough edges sliced women's tongues.  
They waived their arms, pleading in protest  
With the simplistic wish to have spoken.  
We the People heard their hardship,  
Equality in elections to free their throats.  
And so we coated the bowl's corners  
With the clay of their suffrage and votes.  
Still, We the People had not yet created a perfect union.

Our Founding Fathers knew perfection would not exist  
Except through our desires.  
So they left the bowl to mold and mend  
For the future to reap what we require.

235 years following its creation, palms rebond the breaks in the formation.  
For We the People will forever reach for a more perfect nation.

## Entry #8 –

### For the Men that Are White

Protect the people.  
Protect the states,  
Protect the rights.

Become a Nation,  
Become an Union,  
Become a Light.

Remember the struggle of our ancestors.  
Remember our oppressors.  
Forget their ancestors.  
Forget that we are oppressors.

Life for the men that are white.

Constricted by a cycle,  
Constrained by the moon,  
Controlled by spite.

Liberty for the men that are white.

Prevent from owning a mended window,  
Prohibit from owning a new book,  
Preclude from owning an unbent kite.

Property for the men that are white.

Separated by color,  
Segregated by race,  
Secured by a rope so tight.

Equality for the men that are white.

Distaste for the space between their legs,  
Disdain for the lack of a picket fence,  
Disgust for the young with skin as dark as night.

Happiness only for the men that are white.

### The Reality of the Constitution

The United States of America 'the land of hopes and dreams'  
That is built and functions upon the Constitution  
That was created to ultimately be a solution  
It emphasizes power, unity, and the most important: freedom  
Although does it really abide by these principles?  
Time after time its heartfelt purpose vanishes more and more  
It strongly declares "All men are created equal endowed-  
by their creator with certain unalienable rights among these-  
Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness!"

Throughout history and present-day America, these words seem to have no significance  
Men are created equal yet aren't treated equally  
People's human rights are stripped away left to right  
Leaving people with nothing to do but fight!  
The Founding Fathers had no idea it would play out this way  
June 21, 1788 was the important day  
In which our country's framework was approved  
The framework that entices false promises  
For our country to be the way it should be we must use our voice  
So that its people may be able to Rejoice!

Source (Jeffrey Conyers: Constitutional Rights): <https://hellopoetry.com/words/constitutional/>

# Entry #9

## The American Dream

Went from Jamestown to the thirteen colonies  
Declaring Independence to King George  
To no longer be dictated  
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal”  
All men but not black men  
Not Native Americans  
Who was referred to as “Indian savages”  
Because our founding fathers would have rather ignored slavery than start a civil war  
Erasing the section talking about slavery  
War, war, war is all they could think of  
Didn't want to make the South mad  
Didn't want backlash  
Even though a civil war would spike a century later  
“Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”  
Our unalienable rights  
How come only rich white men were happy?  
Women weren't happy  
Lower class white men weren't happy  
Enslaved people weren't happy  
Native Americans weren't happy  
Saying goodbye to harsh dictatorship  
And saying hello to a more modernized society  
A society that go through decades of protesting and reforming  
A society where people would face discrimination and oppression

# Entry #10

# High School Essay Contest (Grades 9-12)

## PROMPT:

The original Articles of Confederation said that Congress only had those powers “expressly delegated” to it by the states. In June 1788, the U.S. Constitution was adopted; Article II only outlined Congressional powers. In December 1791 the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified and adopted. It states, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

Write an essay discussing how the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment has been applied by the states during the pandemic and give examples.

## The Malleable 10th Amendment

In matters of national security, the 10th amendment has been made malleable, fitting the mold of the situation at hand. States rights are the clay and the federal government are the hands manipulating the mold. In March of 2020, the federal government extended their powers past those of the 10th amendment under the guise of "public safety." The federal government's roles and infringements of states' rights has stimulated many debates over their effectiveness and purpose. While other nations around the world began taking preventative measures from the beginning to the middle of January, the federal government did not establish effective legislation for containment of the virus till the beginning of March. The federal government overstepped the powers of the states through the implementation of stay at home orders, mandatory quarantines, and a mask mandate. However, a commonly overlooked aspect of the government mandates is the lack of funding provided to the states to accommodate for the necessary supply demand; notably the PPE masks. In Mid-March of 2020, the federal government placed large orders for N95 masks, ventilators, and other medical equipment, but these materials were not provided to the state governments to sustain themselves. Hospitals across the nation were scrambling for supplies, especially masks to prevent the conception of the little understood virus at the time, but the federal government provided no sympathy or assistance. Former President Trump expressed his belief that it was the responsibility of the state governments to distribute PPE to medical professionals, not the federal government. The federal government sets the standards and breaches the states rights depicted in the 10th amendment, but does not provide the assistance to carry out the demands. Healthcare workers on the frontlines of this pandemic underwent shortages, forced to resort to extreme measures such as wearing trash bags as layers of safety gear, seen by workers in Mount Sinai of New York. While continuing to impose more

# HS Essay Entry # 1 -

regulations and restrictions, the federal government failed to endorse state governments and supplement them in order to accommodate the detrimental effects of the pandemic. In addition to health care mandates initiated by the federal government, the mask and social distancing requirements stemmed from the CDC. From the beginning of the pandemic, requirements and guidelines for masks came from the federal government and the CDC. Yet, in 2022 as the nation tries to heal and return to a newfound sense of normalcy, the control of masks is in longer in the same hands. The state legislatures are now allowed to resume their 10th amendment rights to make decisions best fit for their constituents in terms of lifting and lightening mask mandates. Federal agencies bypassed the rights of the state governments when they deemed it necessary, and took it upon themselves to make the decision on when to return them. If the state governments are responsible for altering the mandates or lifting them, and for acquiring the necessary supplies for these mandates; they should have had the power to make these decisions from the start of the pandemic by the 10th amendment. All of these instances only illustrate the methods in which the federal government has manipulated the 10th amendment to fit their needs at the time. All the meanwhile, neglecting responsibility, leaving the burdens of the Covid-19 Pandemic to the states, while depriving them of their rights.



## Federalism and The Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus Pandemic tested the nation's ability to respond to a global crisis. As our governments designed mandates to ensure our protection, the issue evolved into widespread political debate. When the people disagreed with certain presidential administrations regarding their response to the pandemic, many were unaware of the reservation of powers. However, the roles of federal versus state governments are often lost in translation for our citizens. While federal government organizations like the CDC and the WHO propose pandemic guidelines, it is up to state governors to enact them. In exchange for monetary compensation for abiding, governors will often enforce these policies.

The 10th Amendment states, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution...are reserved to the States...or the people" (The 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment). In history, federalists and anti-federalists clashed about whether the central federal government should be stronger, or the state governments should be stronger. After much deliberation, the central government became the national governing body, but legislation was carefully developed to prevent it from turning into a monarchy. Therefore, state and federal governments equally share responsibilities in decision-making for our nation's response to crises such as the pandemic.

Each level of government must balance responsibilities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "state governments have most of the power to place people in isolation or quarantine under certain circumstances. But federal and state [roles also] overlap" (Bomboy). Most citizens don't realize this essential correlation, but a Facebook user had posted, "Do people realize their GOVERNORS are responsible for how the virus was handled in their state, not the President?" (Caldera). This post was referenced in a USAToday article to raise awareness among readers that it is crucial that citizens understand the law.

## HS Essay Entry #2-

As progress is made towards eradicating the pandemic, controversy has arisen with New York's vaccine mandates. The government is being accused of coercing citizens into getting vaccinated regardless of their opinions. To encourage the process, New York has made many places inaccessible to citizens unless a vaccination card is presented. The evolution of a vaccination card into being a ticket of entry into attractions has sparked debate and outrage. These policies beg the question of whether forcing vaccination on citizens is abusive of power. Although getting the vaccine may be ethical and considerate to the well-being of others, can it be interpreted as an infringement on our freedoms? Can the withholding of access to certain locations be deemed unusual? On the flip side, restaurant owners are also expecting protection. Some restaurant owners, like "Ms. Howard of Dame (one of the first places in NYC to ask diners for vaccine cards) are now worried about the potential for disorderly guests upset about vaccines. She felt the mayor's ending the vaccine requirement was a signal that restaurants don't have the city's support" (Morales).

It is apparent in the pandemic age that the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment's prevalence is extremely significant. The state and national level governments carry the duty of protecting the American people by enacting laws that serve our best interest. Through strict interpretation of governing documents, the people who form the composition of the government have a heavy responsibility to carry. Although the government (like all systems in our world) sometimes fails us, it is up to the American citizens to voice our concerns to these officials. Governing a nation is a complex task that requires assistance from the people it is meant to serve. Our ability to abide by laws and respectfully deliver our thoughts to political representatives can ultimately create ease for officials and lead to a better tomorrow.

## Reserved Powers, Guaranteed by the 10th Amendment

Everyone, in their lifetime, has blamed the government for a particular issue. Surprisingly, the 10th Amendment limits the power of the federal government. “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people” (Library of Congress). By implication, this left significant issues like education up to state governments. Given how each state has a varied range of populations, it is pertinent that there is some form of state sovereignty. As many political leaders understand, the ‘one-size-fits-all’ mentality can not and will not work in national situations. The Tenth Amendment has a controversial history, but because of Anti-federalists’ persistent nature, such Amendment played a crucial role in deciphering the twists and turns of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As state legislatures managed the covid pandemic, the nearly forgotten Tenth Amendment came out of the shadows. State governments, not the federal government, have most of the power to place people in isolation or quarantine under certain circumstances. But in some instances, federal and state officials have overlapping roles. Covid has shown the importance of federalism and the separation of powers between state and federal legislature. As the federal government worked with issues of economy and treaty, state legislatures were able to keep its citizens safe at home.

Such privilege should be used to further life and grant fundamental freedoms to all of the state’s inhabitants. For instance, a recent study expressed citizens were happier in Florida than in New York once their Covid restrictions were lifted. Florida’s cabinet felt it necessary for its citizens to have freedom after being in quarantine for so long.

# HS Essay Entry #3 – Page 1

# HS Essay Entry #3 – Page 2

Another reform in place after the spread of covid was the different learning options. At first, students were forced inside or fully virtual. This became the most popular option throughout the country, especially since the government could not abruptly stop schooling. As covid restrictions got lighter, hybrid learning became integrated. Finally, the classic in-person learning was the breath of fresh air teens and children needed. Such variation of learning options could be integrated quickly, directly because of the Tenth Amendment. As shown, state legislatures are not taking advantage of such powers but instead are using them to benefit the people of the United States.

Accordingly, state legislatures were also able to change mask mandates according to the level of severity in their specified area. This also includes, and is not limited to, vaccine mandates. Mask and vaccine mandates were heavily debated, as citizens wanted their lives to go back to normal. Many states applied the vaccine mandate for concerts, sporting events, and restaurants. Since the federal government had no official jurisdiction in such matters, it was up to state governments to enforce Covid-19 policies.

Presently, the Tenth Amendment plays a significant role in how the country runs. Our central government could have easily fallen into old habits and resembled the English monarchy without the Tenth Amendment. Giving the federal government such immense power over a singular life could mean order by also unhappiness. This is especially true in the matter of Covid-19 restrictions and other current examples.

## HS Essay Entry #4 – Page 1

Imagine a world without freedom of expression: A world where government punishes people for speech it dislikes. Fortunately, we do not live in said world; the 1st Amendment to the Constitution prohibits the government from creating legislation that infringes on Americans' freedom to express themselves, meaning people can speak and write what they please. This vital individual liberty benefits the nation in a multitude of ways.

The 1st Amendment creates diversity of thought that enables people to oppose the majority's opinions. When people know their speech cannot result in governmental oppression, they will challenge popular, yet questionable, ideas. For example, in a time when there was little concern regarding environmental issues, Rachel Carson published her book, *Silent Spring*, which argued overuse of pesticides negatively affected ecosystems. Her book is credited for initiating the modern environmental movement. Although the majority disagreed at the time, she published her book without repercussions because of free speech protections.

## HS Essay Entry #4 –Page 2

Additionally, the 1st Amendment creates government watchdogs. When the government acts poorly, journalists inform the public, without fear of governmental retaliation due to 1st Amendment protections. Subsequently, the government corrects its wrongdoing. For instance, The Guardian and The Washington Post reported that the NSA was spying on millions of Americans through the PRISM program; this mass surveillance was kept secret from both Congress and the American public. In response, Congress passed the USA Freedom Act, a law that curbed mass surveillance. These media outlets created a more accountable and responsive government.

Again, imagine a world without free speech. A world in which majority opinion gets stuck in time. A world where the government is free to do what it pleases without objections. The 1st Amendment protects us from these scenarios. The 1st Amendment has and will continue to benefit the nation in numerous ways.

## HS Essay Entry #5 –

One liberty that I feel is in the most need of protection from governmental oppression is the freedom of speech. The freedom of speech which had been written by our founding fathers has become one of the most crucial parts of our constitution. Freedom of speech is the main reason why our democracy is so successful. With freedom of speech, we are able to keep our political figures in check, which is the civic duty of US citizens. It is so important because one of the best ways of transferring information is through communication. Without this liberty to express ourselves, we wouldn't be able to communicate as freely. I don't believe that we would have been able to come so far as a nation because without it, we could have been led down a bad path with unlawful, as well as immoral activities taking place. Freedom of speech helps societal growth and is the main reason a lot of nations thrive.

Another individual liberty that I feel is in the most need of protection from governmental oppression is the right to a speedy and public trial. In my opinion this is another one of the most important liberties given to the US citizens. You might be asking yourself why the right to a speedy trial is so important? It is so important because with it people avoid waiting in jail for years for their trial where you are often found innocent. Personally, I think that alone makes this liberty so important. It is also very crucial to give citizens a public trial. With a public trial, it keeps the judicial system honest because with the public watching it ensures a fair and just case. With the help of the US Constitution, these two liberties are protected.