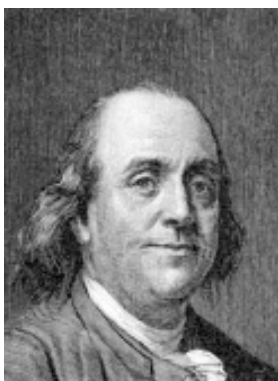


Announcing the 2014 Bill of Rights Essay Contest

Sponsored by the Lower Hudson Valley Chapter of the New York Civil Liberties Union



*Those who would give up essential liberty,
to purchase a little temporary safety,
deserve neither liberty nor safety.*

- Benjamin Franklin, for the Pennsylvania Assembly in its *Reply to the Governor*, November 11, 1755

Edward Snowden: Hero or Traitor?

We want students to learn about American freedoms and think critically about the benefits they provide to all of us. This contest is also designed to show how free speech works by giving students a vehicle to openly voice their opinions. The essays judged to be the best will be those that effectively address the topic, have a structured argument, cite appropriate background information and case law, and display good writing.

Scenario for Bill of Rights Contest:

Edward Snowden was a contractor working for the United States government, who discovered in the course of his work that the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) was conducting surveillance of hundreds of millions of Americans' electronic communications, including phone calls, text messages and emails.

Snowden used his government security clearance to download top-secret information from NSA files about the details of the agency's surveillance programs. And then he transmitted the information to the press. In June 2013, a British newspaper, *The Guardian*, published the first of what would be many articles with information shared by Snowden. Under threat of arrest by American authorities, Snowden fled to Russia, where he has been granted temporary asylum.

Whether Snowden is a traitor or a hero is still a debate – and the press continues to make public confidential information shared by Snowden.

The U.S. government position is that the NSA's mass surveillance operations are authorized under federal law and that Snowden's disclosures threaten national security. The government has filed a criminal complaint against Snowden, charging him with theft of government property and violations of the 1917 Espionage Act.

Edward Snowden's position is that he made the disclosures in order to inform the public about a serious violation of the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which protects the privacy of the American people from unreasonable searches by the government. Snowden believes that he should be considered a "whistleblower" under federal law, which protects government employees from being punished for revealing agency misconduct.

In the wake of Snowden's disclosures to the press, the NSA's data-gathering programs have been challenged in court, including two cases that resulted in December 2013 rulings that came to opposite conclusions as to whether portions of the NSA's surveillance activities violate the Fourth Amendment.

Both cases are on appeal, and it is likely that the U.S. Supreme Court will ultimately decide the issue.

Essay topic: Does the NSA's mass surveillance of Americans' electronic communications, arguably authorized by the Patriot Act and the FISA Amendments Act, violate the American people's Fourth Amendment right to privacy? Should Edward Snowden be protected as a "whistleblower" for disclosing details of the programs? Is Edward Snowden a traitor, a hero or something in between?

Awards

We will announce the contest winners at the NYCLU Lower Hudson Valley's Annual Bill of Rights Day event on Monday, Dec. 15, at St. Paul's National Historic Site in Mt. Vernon. Students are not required to attend the event to be eligible for awards.

- Grand Prize (Best Overall): \$300
- Second Prize (Overall): \$200
- Best-in-School Prizes: \$100
The top-scoring student essay submitted from EACH SCHOOL with more than 12 contest entries. (NOTE: Grand and second prize winners will not be eligible for in-school prizes.)

Eligibility Requirements

All 10th, 11th and 12th grade students attending schools in Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster or Westchester counties are eligible for the essay contest.

Students who have family members serving as contest judges are not eligible to participate.

Instructions

- Each student must include an **entry form/cover page**, which may be downloaded at <http://www.nyclu.org/lhv>, and which is included with these materials.
- All essays and entry forms must be submitted on or before the **contest deadline: Friday, Nov. 14, 2014.**
- Submissions should be emailed to **lowerhudsonvalley@nyclu.org**, and ESSAY CONTEST should begin the subject line.
- Please attach the essay and entry form to your message as a single file. Acceptable file formats are .doc, .pdf or .rtf.
- Essays must be in Times New Roman font, size 12, and must be double-spaced with at least one-inch margins.
- Essays should be no more than **three pages in length**. The cover page and any bibliography are not included in the page-count.
- The student's name and school should appear on the top of each page of essay text, and the page number on the bottom of each page.
- References should be included and clearly identified.

Rules

- Each essay must reflect the contestant's own research, writing and original thinking.
- Only one essay may be submitted by each contestant.
- Essays will become property of the NYCLU, which reserves the right to republish and use the essays with citations given to the writers.

Teacher Verification

- Teachers, please send an email to **lowerhudsonvalley@nyclu.org** with a list of students' names to verify their submissions.

Student Entry Form/Cover Page

**2014 Bill of Rights Day
Student Essay Contest**

Name _____ Grade _____

Email address: _____

School _____

School address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Name of supervising teacher _____

Student Verification

I verify that I am submitting my original work.

Printed Name _____

Date: _____

This entry form must accompany your essay and will serve as your cover page.

Entries must be submitted by email to **lowerhudsonvalley@nyclu.org**. Attach this entry form and your essay as a single file. Acceptable attachment formats are **.doc, .pdf or .rtf**.

Entries must be received by Friday, November 14, 2014.
