

## NEWS FROM THE THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

December 5, 2023

*Philadelphia* – The Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee of the Judicial Council of the Third Circuit announced today that it is hosting an essay contest for **5th and 6th grade classes** focused on civics, citizenship, and the concept of “why juries are important to our democratic society.” The essay prompt is: “Why is the Right to a Jury Trial Important?”

The Third Judicial Circuit is comprised of the U.S. Court of Appeals as well as the Federal District Courts of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The latter are trial courts, which include bankruptcy courts. Chief Circuit Judge Michael A. Chagares noted that “It is incumbent on us, as federal judges, to engage with our youth and to offer a robust civics education program.” The Committee and its members are partnering with bar associations, civic organizations, and educational institutions across the geographical reach of the Third Circuit to promote and oversee the essay contest.

**This is a Class essay. Ideally, the class should work together to write the essay, so that only one essay is submitted on behalf of the Class. Class essays must be submitted on or before Friday, March 29, 2024.** Classes submitting the best essays in each district (District of Delaware, District of New Jersey, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Middle District of Pennsylvania, Western District of Pennsylvania, and the District of the Virgin Islands) of the Third Circuit will be invited to one of the nine

courthouses in the Third Circuit to present their essays during the first weeks of May, in celebration of Law Day. The essays and presentations will be evaluated based on focus, content development, organization, and style. Prizes will be awarded.

Circuit Judge D. Brooks Smith, who chairs the Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee overseeing the contest, stated “The citizen jury is central to our country’s criminal and civil justice systems. The accused in a criminal case, and a party in most civil cases, has a constitutional right to be tried by a jury of his or her peers. That right is deeply embedded in the legal traditions of England, and later, the American colonies. It is important that young Americans know this part of their heritage. And it is critical that they understand that, as adult citizens, they will have a solemn obligation to answer a call to jury service if and when they receive it.”

For more information about the essay contest, please visit the Third Circuit Court of Appeals website at <https://www.ca3.uscourts.gov/> or contact 267-299-4306.

# **Announcing Class Essay Contest**

The right to a jury is mentioned in more of the first Ten Amendments to the U.S. Constitution (Bill of Rights) than any other right. Our founders clearly believed juries were important to our democratic society. Please write a class essay to respond to the question:

**“Why is the Right to a Jury Trial Important?”**

**Brought to you by the Third Circuit Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee**



**This essay contest is open to all 5th and 6th grade classes in Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and U.S. Virgin Islands schools. This is a class essay. One essay must be submitted on behalf of the class. Class essays must be submitted on or before Friday, March 29, 2024.**

**Consider the following questions to assist in class discussion in developing the class essay but the essay need not discuss all the questions:**

- *What is the role of a jury?*
- *Is our jury system unique from other countries?*
- *Why must a juror be fair and impartial?*
- *Why is it important that our citizens serve on juries?*
- *Why must the 12-member jury in a criminal trial be unanimous in its verdict?*
- *What is the difference between a grand jury and a petit jury?*
- *Why is it important that a jury base its decision only on the testimony and evidence that they see and hear in the courtroom during the trial?*

**Teachers should feel free to contact the committee if they would like a lawyer or a judge to assist the class in the discussion or development of this topic.**

**Essay contest rules, contact information, and suggested resources follow.**

## 2024 Essay Contest Rules

**ENTRY DEADLINE:** Essay Contest opens [December 2, 2023.]

Entries must be submitted by 11:59 pm, March 29, 2024. Finalists will be selected in April.

**PRIZES:** Winners of the top three class essays will be invited to participate in Law Week programs with federal judges and practitioners in area courthouses.

**HOW TO ENTER:** Entry information can be accessed at <https://www.ca3.uscourts.gov>

Essays, in PDF format, must be submitted electronically to the mailbox (email addresses provided below) for the courthouse closest to your school:

[edpa\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:edpa_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (Philadelphia, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Lehigh, Montgomery & Northampton counties)

[mdpa\\_harrisburg\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:mdpa_harrisburg_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (Harrisburg area)

[mdpa\\_scranton\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:mdpa_scranton_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (Scranton area)

[mdpa\\_wilkes\\_barre\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:mdpa_wilkes_barre_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (Wilkes Barre area)

[mdpa\\_williamsport\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:mdpa_williamsport_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (Williamsport area)

[wdpa\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:wdpa_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (Pittsburgh area)

[dnj\\_camden\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:dnj_camden_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (South Jersey)

[dnj\\_trenton\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:dnj_trenton_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (Central Jersey)

[dnj\\_newark\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:dnj_newark_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (North Jersey)

[dde\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:dde_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (Delaware)

[dvi\\_st\\_thomas\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:dvi_st_thomas_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (St. Thomas)

[dvi\\_st\\_croix\\_essay\\_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:dvi_st_croix_essay_contest@ca3.uscourts.gov) (St. Croix)

**LENGTH AND FORMAT:** This is a **Class Essay**. One essay should be submitted on behalf of the class, ideally written by the class as a group effort. The class essay should be submitted by the class teacher on behalf of a class as a PDF and include the teacher's email and telephone. Essays should be typewritten and no longer than 500 words.

**JUDGING:** Essays will be judged on four criteria:

(1) Focus, (2) Content Development, (3) Organization, and (4) Style

Each criterion will be worth 25 points.

**FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONTEST PLEASE CONTACT US:**

[Courts\\_Community\\_Rule\\_of\\_Law@ca3.uscourts.gov](mailto:Courts_Community_Rule_of_Law@ca3.uscourts.gov)

or 267-299-4306

## Suggested Resources

### Defining the Right to a Jury

1. American Bar Association: [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/public\\_education/resources/dialoguepart1.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/public_education/resources/dialoguepart1.pdf)
2. Annenberg Public Policy Center: <https://www.annenbergclassroom.org/resource/jury-service-duty-privilege-citizens/>
3. Civil Jury Project: <https://civiljuryproject.law.nyu.edu/>
4. Court Shorts: Jury Service: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKpiwpajm6I>
5. Juries, Lay Judges, and Trials: [https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/clsops\\_papers/122/](https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/clsops_papers/122/)
6. National Geographic: <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/jury/>
7. United States Courts: Jury Service Overview: <https://youtu.be/grnUvCNAfGA>
8. United States Courts: Learn About Jury Service: <https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/jury-service/learn-about-jury-service>

### Relevant U.S. Cases

1. *Quercia v. United States*, 289 U.S. 466 (1933); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/289/466/>
2. *Sheppard v. Maxwell*, 384 U.S. 333 (1966); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/384/333/>
3. *Duncan v. Louisiana*, 391 U.S. 145 (1968); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/391/145/>
4. *Taylor v. Louisiana*, 419 U.S. 522 (1975); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/419/522/>
5. *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/476/79/>
6. *Chauffeurs Local 391 v. Terry*, 494 U.S. 558 (1990); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/494/558/>
7. *Ramos v. Louisiana*, 590 U.S. \_\_\_\_ (2020); available at <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/590/18-5924/>

### Constitutional Amendments on the Right to a Jury

- 5th Amendment: <https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-05/>
- 6th Amendment: <https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-06/>
- 7th Amendment: <https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-07/>
- <https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-24/>