

NEWS FROM THE THIRD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

September 2, 2026

Philadelphia – The Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee of the Judicial Council of the Third Circuit announced today that it is hosting an Annual Third Circuit American Democracy Video Contest for high school students in grades nine through twelve on the **Importance of American Democracy**. This is the Third Circuit’s video competition geared toward high schoolers.

The Third Judicial Circuit is comprised of the U.S. Court of Appeals as well as the Federal District Courts (the trial courts) of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The trial courts include the bankruptcy courts. Chief Circuit Judge Michael A. Chagares noted that “Given the importance of civic education, it is incumbent on us, as federal judges, to engage with our youth, utilizing tools and platforms with generational significance. Unlike other contests in our Circuit, this competition aims to engage high school students through video creativity – an art form that predominates among students of that age group both in creation and consumption.” 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 Video Contest.

High school students will submit original-content videos depicting why our democratic institutions and the fundamental rights and principles associated with them are critical to the future of the country. Videos are to be 5-7 minutes in length, and a

rotating subcommittee of our circuit-wide committee will judge the videos and select one winner. The winner will be celebrated at the federal courthouse in the winner's home district (or division) during a naturalization ceremony. The winning video will be played during all districts' naturalization ceremonies until the next winner is selected. The winning video also will appear on the Third Circuit's website, district websites, and other related social media platforms. Video Contest submissions are due on Monday, November 2, 2026, and the award will be presented in early to mid-December, in celebration of Bill of Rights Day. The videos will be evaluated based on creativity, adherence to the theme, and content.

Circuit Judge D. Brooks Smith, who chairs the Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee overseeing the contest, stated "Our Committee continues to look for more ways – through varied media and forms of expression – to provide young people with ways to give voice to their hopes and concerns about American democracy. The traditional essay is one such means. But various forms of artistic expression can be just as meaningful and offer students diverse outlets suited to their unique talents. We have initiated the Video Contest with high expectations."

Information about the Video Contest will be posted on Wednesday September 2nd on the Third Circuit Court of Appeals website at <https://ca3ccrofl.powerappsportals.us/> or you may contact 267-299-4306.