GRAND LODGE
FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

MARK E. EATON
Administrator
Americanism Essay Contest

1 Orms Steet
WARWICK, RI 02889-9318
H (401) 738-8133
C (401) 529-9213
meeaton1@verizon.net

July 2025

2025-2026 GRAND LODGE AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

CHALLENGING YOUNG, INQUISITIVE MINDS TO EXPLORE AMERICAN VALUES!

"What Does Service to Your Country Mean to You?"

The features introduced to the contest 3 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, "What Does Service to Your Country Mean To You?"** for the 2025-2026 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 Chicago, Illinois in July 2026. 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 respectfully. 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 local 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!

Mark Eaton

Mark E. Eaton, *Administrator*
Americanism Essay Contest
Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee

2025-2026 Americanism Essay Contest
Cover Sheet

(MUST be attached to each Essay)

"What Does Service to Your Country Mean To You?"

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, 2025.

Section 2 — to be filled out by Lodge Chairman

Chairman's Name _____ Phone Number (_____) _____

Sponsoring Lodge Name & Number _____

Address _____ City _____ State ____ ZIP _____

E-mail _____

Select the top three essays from each division and send them to the District Americanism Chairman by January 31, 2026 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, 2026 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, Mark E. Eaton, by March 31, 2026.

AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

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

THEME:

"What Does Service to Your Country Mean To You?"

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 Chicago, IL, July 5-8, 2026.

ENTRY DATE:

Essay should be submitted to local Elks Lodge on/before December 15, 2025.

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

Sponsoring Elks Lodge: **Southern Pines Elks Lodge** No. **1692**

Address: **515 SE Broad St, Southern Pines NC 28387**

Contact Person: **Ron Tate**

Phone No. **336-209-1565**

E-mail: **rontate336@gmail.com**

2025-2026
AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

Essay Theme: *"What Does Service to Your Country Mean To You?"*

1. Eligible participants must be a student enrolled in the fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth grade during the normal 2025-26 school year, preceding June 30, 2026. **Deadline: Must be submitted to Local Lodge by December 15, 2025.**

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 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

There are now four separate divisions for judging essays:

• **Division I**—5th grade; • **Division II**—6th grade • **Division III**—7th grade; & • **Division IV**—8th grade

PROCEDURES FOR LODGE AMERICANISM CHAIRMAN

Select from submitted entries the top three essays from each division and send the twelve essays to the District Americanism Chairman by Jan. 31, 2026, or the date established by the State Association.

PROCEDURES FOR DISTRICT AMERICANISM CHAIRMAN

Select the top three essays in each division from all entries submitted by Local Lodges and send the twelve essays to the State Americanism Chairman by Feb. 28, 2026, or the date established by the State Association.

PROCEDURES FOR STATE AMERICANISM CHAIRMAN

Select the first-, second- and third-place winners for the state from entries submitted by the District Chairman. In addition, State Chairman forwards the first-place winners from each division to the Grand Lodge Essay Contest Administrator. *(Must be postmarked by March 31, 2026.)*

SEND TO: *Essay Contest Administrator* **Mark E. Eaton, Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee, 1 Orms Street, Warwick, RI 02889-9318.**

Plaques and monetary awards for first-, second-, and third-place winning essays in Divisions I, II, III, and IV, will be available for pickup at the Fraternal Committee's Booth at the end of the Grand Lodge Session on July 8, 2026.