

Supreme Court of Wisconsin: Wisconsin essay contest winner celebrates the First Amendment

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Madison, Wisconsin (April 27, 2022) – Brookfield’s Kelsey Raddeman won top honors among middle school students in the 2022 National Center for State Courts’ (NCSC) Civics Education Essay Contest. Raddeman, a seventh grader at Pilgrim Park Middle School, wrote about the value of the First Amendment as a force in driving conversation and change.

“Martin Luther King Jr. once said, ‘Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter,’” Raddeman wrote in opening her essay. “I believe that the first Amendment to the U.S Constitution made the biggest difference in people’s lives because change requires conversations, conversation requires open communication, open communication requires free speech. Therefore, I think free speech drives change...,” she continued.

The NCSC asked third through 12th graders from across the country to respond to the question: *Which Amendment to the U.S. Constitution has made the biggest difference in people’s lives? Explain how and why.*

“Kelsey did a great job explaining her choice and why the U.S. Constitution is so vital to us all,” said Wisconsin Supreme Court Chief Justice Annette Kingsland Ziegler. “This is an impressive honor, and Kelsey did a great job representing Wisconsin.”

The contest question is based on the American Bar Association’s 2022 [Law Day](#) (May 1) theme, “Toward a More Perfect Union: The Constitution in Times of Change.”

“This Law Day is an opportunity for everyone to take a moment and appreciate the U.S. Constitution, the Rule of Law and the rights we all have in common,” Ziegler said.

Students from 49 states, the District of Columbia, and 19 countries participated in this year’s contest, which drew 2,765 entries. Essays were judged on creativity, accuracy, length and grammar. The nine winners will receive cash prizes totaling \$3,000.

Raddeman’s social studies teacher Stacy Stewart said Raddeman took the initiative to enter the contest on her own.

“I am extremely proud of Kelsey’s efforts and essay. I preach about putting our learning into action, and she did exactly that,” Stewart said.

Information about the contest, including videos of the winners, can be found on the [NCSC’s website](#).