

11th Annual NFWL / NRA Bill of Rights Essay Contest

“The Great Enfranchisement: Women’s Suffrage”

This year, the National Foundation for Women Legislators (NFWL) and the National Rifle Association (NRA) are sponsoring their 11th annual nationwide Bill of Rights Essay Contest. The focus this year will be on the Bill of Rights as shown through prominent women during the suffrage movement as women fought for the right to vote. The deadline for submission is **Tuesday, August 19th, 2008** after which an NFWL committee will judge each essay. There will be a quarter-final, semi-final and final round of judging after which the seven award recipients will be chosen.

If you are a female High School junior or senior, class of 2008 or 2009, you are eligible to participate. The seven winners will receive an award, a \$3,000 unrestricted college scholarship, and an all-expense-paid trip to NFWL’s 2008 Annual Conference. The Conference will take place in November, after the election and before Thanksgiving. The location will be announced soon. **You will be required to secure a state legislator as your sponsor and that legislator must also agree to attend the entire conference with you (they will have all of their travel expenses paid by NFWL as well).**

This year’s essay topic is “The Great Enfranchisement: Women’s Suffrage.” Write a 400- to 600-word essay on how the enfranchisement of American women was achieved from the 1890s to 1920.

The Scholarship Committee will weigh four specific elements in submissions: 1) story-telling ability, especially expressive and dramatic stories, 2) how much your writing inspires its audience, 3) how clearly you understand the U.S. Bill of Rights, and 4) how much original insight you convey about heroic qualities and how our Constitutional rights can enable a woman to actuate those heroic qualities. Errors in spelling and grammar can have a disqualifying effect.

The mission of the National Foundation for Women Legislators is to enable women lawmakers to be effective leaders. NFWL provides women Governors, Members of Congress, state legislators and other elected women lawmakers with strategic resources, including opportunities for networking, leadership skill development, debates and briefings on current public policy issues.

The National Rifle Association, established in 1871, is a grassroots membership organization with more than four million members committed to defending our freedoms as they are enumerated in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The Second Amendment states, “The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.” The NRA is proud to sponsor this annual essay contest with NFWL in order to enable young women committed to defending the Bill of Rights to attend college and advance women in leadership.

Application Information and Requirements

Eligibility. To be eligible for this year's essay contest, applicants must be college-bound female high school juniors or seniors – from either the Class of 2008 or the Class of 2009. The seven contest winners and their sponsoring legislators also must be able to attend the entire NFWL Annual Conference where students will be presented with the award. Dates and location for the conference will be available soon.

Deadline for Essay Submission. Your essay must arrive at the NFWL office no later than **Tuesday, August 19th, 2008.** Essays received after this date may not be considered for the contest.

Other Requirements.

IMPORTANT: Before sending in your completed scholarship application, please fax or mail the Essay Contest Verification Form to the NFWL office. This form should be sent in prior to the submission of your application so NFWL can communicate with you and your legislator if there are any changes with the contest or conference before the deadline. If you are sending your application very close to the deadline, please just include your Verification Form in the packet.

In addition to your essay, please submit:

1. Two personal reference letters;
2. The name of your sponsoring woman state legislator*;

***You must have a woman state legislator sponsor you in this contest. To find a woman legislator in your state, visit your state's legislative website (ex: www.state.va.us for Virginia– search for link to government/legislature). Your sponsoring legislator does not have to be from your district, but does have to be from your state. If you choose to have a Congresswoman sponsor you, you must have a woman state legislator as a co-sponsor. If you have trouble locating a woman legislator in your state, call the NFWL office.**

Awards. The seven contest winners will be notified by Friday, October 3, 2008. Each of the winners will receive: (1) a \$3,000 unrestricted scholarship to use towards college tuition at any U.S. college or university; and (2) an all-expense-paid trip to NFWL's 2008 Annual Conference this November. Here you will meet women lawmakers from across the United States, learn about public policy, and establish relationships that often grow into mentoring opportunities. NFWL will pay completely for your and your sponsoring legislator's airfare, lodging, meals and conference registration fees. You and your legislator must attend all days of the conference.

Essay Submissions and Contact Information.

Questions may be directed to the NFWL office at 202-293-3040, ext. 1006

Fax: 202-293-5430 | E-mail: scholarships@womenlegislators.org

You may also visit our website, www.womenlegislators.org, to view scholarship FAQs.

Send your completed essay application to:

**NFWL / NRA Essay Contest
c/o National Foundation for Women Legislators, Inc.
910 16th Street, NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20006**

Essay Topic Writing Requirements

This year's essay topic is "The Great Enfranchisement: Women's Suffrage." Write a 400- to 600-word essay on how the enfranchisement of American women was achieved from the 1890s to 1920.

The right to vote in elections is called both enfranchisement and suffrage. Begin by taking a look at the seven decades of the American women's suffrage movement from its Seneca Falls declaration in 1848 to its triumphant success in 1920. Then narrow your focus.

Recall that in 1886, the U.S. Senate voted 2-to-1 against women's right to vote. In 1919, the U.S. Senate voted 2-to-1 for it. Within a year, 36 state legislatures had ratified the 19th Amendment to our Constitution.

What changed? How did this 70-year struggle succeed? From the 1890s to 1910s, how did leaders fulfill the goal declared in 1848 by Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucy Stone?

Consider the natural rights argument – that women have individual rights to self-government and to choose their representatives and their government — and the impact it had on the outcome. How did the natural rights argument help the women's suffrage movement succeed? Were natural rights embedded in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

You can write about one of the major national leaders of the movement in the early 20th Century, including Harriet Stanton Blatch, Carrie Chapman Catt, or Alice Paul. What was this leader like? How did she achieve results?

You can write about the pioneering states that enfranchised women in the 1890s: Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho. What happened in these states? How was the debate won?

You can focus on the debate and battle in the U.S. Congress. You can focus on the debate and battle in the state legislatures.

Or you can focus on any other aspect of the manner in which the 19th Amendment was enacted and ratified. For example, you could consider the movement's attention-getting tactics of parades, street speeches, picketing, and White House vigils.

Important: In addition to the basics of spelling, punctuation, and style, the judges will be judging your essay for its (1) original research, (2) historical insight and perspective, (3) inspirational quality, and (4) dramatic storytelling.

Topic Suggestions & Questions to Consider

Other women you are likely to encounter in your research include Lucy Burns, Alice Duer Miller, Jeannette Rankin, Caroline Severence, Frances Willard, Victoria Woodhull, and Maud Younger. Also consider the role played by leaders of National Association of Colored Women including Lucy Thurman, Elizabeth Carter Brooks, Mrs. Booker T. Washington, and Mary B. Talbert. Feel free to share stories or help us better understand any of these women.

Organizations you may read about include the American Equal Rights Association, the National Woman's Suffrage Association, the American Women's Suffrage Association, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the Equality League of Self Supporting Women, the Women's Political Union, the National Women's Party, the National Association of Colored Women, and the National Federation of Women's Clubs. Feel free to tell us more about these organizations.

In addition to the core questions asked above, as you research this topic for your essay, think about questions like these:

* What motivated the women citizens, women leaders, and other citizens and leaders who participated in the women's suffrage movement?

* What were the principles and ideals of women suffragists? What was their broader vision of women's role in our society and politics? How did they view the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

* What did state legislators and Members of Congress say on the issue of women's right to vote? What were the arguments on both sides? How did suffragists win these debates in Congress and state legislatures?

* How should your generation view the women's suffragist movement? What can your generation learn from them and why should your generation admire the leaders of this movement?

* What countries today do not allow women to vote? Is there anything we can do as Americans to help secure women's suffrage as a universal right throughout the world?

* In the 2010s, how should Americans honor and celebrate the women's suffragist movement, its leaders, the 100-year anniversary of its milestone events in the 1910s, and finally the Centennial of the 19th Amendment in 2020?

NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR  WOMEN LEGISLATORS, INC.

NFWL-NRA Essay Contest Verification Form

Fax back this form to 202-293-5430 or mail to NFWL as soon as possible, separate from your essay submission. If you have questions regarding the contest, please call 202-293-3040 ext. 1006 or e-mail scholarships@womenlegislators.org.

Please fill out every line you can:

Student Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Birth Date ____/____/____

E-mail: _____ Fax: _____

Sponsoring Legislator: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

College(s) planning or desiring to attend in Fall 2008 or 2009:

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

High School attended: _____

Date of High School graduation: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Signature

Date