

Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life

ORATORY CONTEST

Rules

ELIGIBILITY

1. High school juniors and seniors, in that grade Feb. 1 of the year of the competition, are eligible to compete. In the case of advanced students or home schooling, the school must recognize the student as a junior or senior (a letter from the school is recommended) or the year the student will enter college will be used to determine the student's eligibility.
2. Students who have competed in their junior year may compete the following year as seniors (with an entirely new speech) except if the student has won first place in the national competition. Second place winners may compete again.

SPEECH CONTENT

1. Contestants are to research, write and present an original pro-life speech on abortion, infanticide, euthanasia or embryonic stem cell research. The speech should address one of these topics directly.
2. The speech is to be five to seven minutes in length. However, a contestant will not be disqualified unless the speech is less than four minutes or longer than eight minutes in length. It is strongly suggested that the student stay within the five- to seven-minute limit. Judges are instructed to use their judgment regarding over- or under-limit speeches. If they feel the additional time was not essential to the speech they will lower the score.
3. The speech is to be an oration. Appropriate gestures are allowed. Props are not allowed.
4. Speech content may not be significantly changed as a contestant advances. Fine tuning for minor corrections or to adjust length is allowed and encouraged. A written copy of the winner's speech must be forwarded on to the next level to ensure that no major changes have been made.
5. The contestant should use up-to-date, factual information.

6. The style or speech type should be appropriate to the message of the speech. Any type the student deems appropriate is acceptable, except for a dramatic presentation. A dramatic presentation is considered anything read or performed that has been previously written, i.e. a short story or poem. Although quotations to support a position or statement are appropriate, they may not dominate the speech and should be adequately cited. For our purposes, “dramatic” is also defined to include acting as a thing or another person, such as acting out the life of an unborn baby. This rule is not to be interpreted to exclude the use of emotion. The judges’ background and qualifications differ, although they are all pro-life; therefore, the speech should appeal to a broad audience.
7. No copyrighted speeches shall be used in the contest.
8. Contestants may use notes
9. Contestants are judged in four areas: introduction, content, presentation and conclusion. Contestants are given a score of 1-10 (10 being the best) in each area. The scores are added together (40 being perfect). The judge’s scores are added together for the grand total. The grand total will determine which contestants move to the next level.
10. The judges’ decision will be final.
11. All efforts are made for accuracy. In the event of a mistake, every effort will be made to correct it.
12. Ties will be handled by the contest director and the decision of the contest director will be final.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Are there any guidelines regarding the topics of the speeches?

A: The contest rules specify that contestants are to research, write and present a pro-life speech on abortion, infanticide, euthanasia or stem cell research. Within those general guidelines, students are encouraged to explore themes of current interest and importance within the Right to Life movement, such as fetal development, abortion methods, post-abortion syndrome, RU-486, informed consent and parental consent legislation, the “quality of life” ethic, and many others. Speeches should remain within the spectrum of Right to Life issues. The National Right to Life Committee and its affiliates promote, encourage and engage in only legal activities. They do not have a position on such issues as contraception, sex education, capital punishment or the national defense.

Q: Must speeches be memorized?

A: Not necessarily. It is acceptable for contestants to use notes or even to refer to their written speech during their presentations. Extemporaneous speeches are not allowed; a copy of the speech must be presented to the contest organizer prior to the contestant's presentation.

Q: May a contestant change his or her speech after winning a contest and before the next level of competition?

A: Fine tuning for minor corrections, timing, etc., is not only allowed but encouraged. However, a completely altered speech is not allowed. (Remember, a copy of the winner's speech is forwarded on to the next level.) NOTE: A contestant's speech must be original for each year's National Oratory Contest and must not have been used in any other competition.