

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Oratorical Commission

Department of Missouri

American Legion

February 20, 2017

Oratorical Commission

1. **PURPOSE:** The Oratorical Commission, each school year, administers an Oratorical Contest for high school students in Missouri.
 - a. The purpose of the contest is to develop knowledge and appreciation of the United States Constitution, the ability to think and speak clearly and critically, and the acceptance of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship.
 - b. The contest meets guidelines of the Missouri State High School Activities Association, and appears in the Advisory List of Contests and Activities, of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. The Legion contest is a partner with the National Speech & Debate Association, the honor society for high school students (formerly the National Forensic League).

2. **SCOPE:** This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) applies to the Department Oratorical Commission, Department of Missouri. The members of this commission can use this SOP to know, understand and conduct the duties of the Oratorical Commission.

3. **AUTHORITY:** Department of Missouri Constitution and By-Laws, The American Legion, Department of Missouri.

4. **References:**
 - a. The American Legion, Department of Missouri, Inc., Annual High School Oratorical Scholarship Program, "A Constitutional Speech Contest" annual publication/fold-out.
 - b. The American Legion, High School Oratorical Scholarship Program "A Constitutional Speech Contest" Chairman's Guide.
 - c. The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution of the United States of America (As Amended), distributed by The American Legion, The National Americanism Commission.
 - d. Annex A – Script for conducting the Department Oratorical Contest

5. MEMBERSHIP:

- a. The Department Oratorical Commission has a membership of nine (9) members, including the chair.
- b. Nine members of the Commission are appointed by the Department Commander, with the approval of the Department Executive Committee (DEC), to serve three (3) year terms with three member's appointments expiring each year.
- c. The Department Commander shall recommend to the DEC one member to serve as the Commission Chair.
- d. Each year, the Department Commander may recommend to the DEC either the reappointment of commission member(s) whose membership(s) is expiring, or the appointment of a new commission member(s) to replace a member(s) whose membership is expiring.

6. Meetings:

- a. Department Convention
- b. Department Fall Conference (This is an open meeting to all Legionnaires)
 - (1) The Chair of the Commission calls this meeting to discuss any changes to the Oratorical Commission Program; conduct training open to all Legionnaires, and to insure that all materials are current or to discuss changes to them.
- c. Department Spring Conference
 - (1) Conduct the Missouri State Oratorical Program Finals.
 - (2) To set the contest dates for the various levels of the contest for the upcoming school year.
 - (3) To discuss with commission members, any problems or issues that may have arisen during the current contest year.

7. Responsibilities and specific tasks of the Oratorical Commission

- a. The Oratorical Commission supervises the oratorical program in Missouri. The Commission is the final authority on all aspects of the contest.
- b. The state is divided into four zones:
 - i. Zone 1 - Legion Districts 1, 2, 8 and 9
 - ii. Zone 2 - Legion Districts 3, 4, 5 and 7
 - iii. Zone 3 - Legion Districts 6, 15, 16 and 17
 - iv. Zone 4 - Legion Districts 10, 11/12, 13 and 14
- c. Each District Commander appoints a District Oratorical Chair. The District Chair appoints the County Oratorical Chairs. The Department Chair (and often the

District Chair) often must help the District Chair in making the County appointments

- d. The Commission appoints the four Zone Chairs.
- e. Each Chair cooperates with the local schools and Legion Posts to promote the program; to supervise generally the contests in the area; and, in addition, to preside at the particular contest he or she chairs.

8. Schedule of Contest Dates

The schedule of contests puts strict time limits on the Oratorical Commission. The Commission sets the schedule of contests for the next year at its annual meeting at the Spring Conference. For years, the schedule has been about the same, primarily due to the need to complete all Department contests by March, before National's deadline for National Finals.

For Example, the 2017-18 contest dates are as follows.

High School	-	Before November 30, 2017
County	-	Between December 9 and 18, 2017
District	-	Before January 22, 2018
Zone	-	Before February 5, 2018
State	-	On February 17, 2018

9. Budget of the Oratorical Commission

- a. The annual budget of the Commission is **\$9,000**.
- b. The largest part of the budget is the annual scholarship awards:

(1) Department

1st place	Gold Medal	\$2,000.00
2nd place	Silver Medal	\$1,800.00
3rd place	Silver Medal	\$1,600.00
4th place	Silver Medal	\$1,400.00

(2) Zone

1st place	Gold Medal
2nd place	Silver Medal
Others	Bronze Medal

(3) District

1st place	Silver Medal
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2nd place Bronze Medal
County award Brooch

- c. If a high school contest is held, the sponsoring Post should award the winner a bronze medal, available from Department Headquarters, P.O. Box 179, Jefferson City 65102 at the prevailing price.
- d. The Commission's budget also includes expenses of postage, publication of the annual brochure, and the luncheon at the Spring Conference.

10. Resources of the Commission

- a. Contests are sponsored and financed by The American Legion Department of Missouri, Inc., and the Legion Posts throughout the State.
- b. The key resources are the committed Legionnaires across the state who contribute untold hours of work and out-of-pocket expenses to chair, coordinate and support the program. Several high-school teachers and coaches strongly support the program. Many local and state leaders volunteer their time to serve as judges at all levels of the contest. Some past contestants, especially state champions, contribute hours to the program.
- c. The key financial resource is the budget mentioned in paragraph 9.

11. Detailed steps required for each activity, program and task

- a. Email messages to all schools in Missouri (sent in September). Provides details for entering the Oratorical Contest, and all rules of the program.
- b. Letter to Post adjutants (sent in September) Includes checklists, forms and rules.
- c. A letter is sent to each County, District and Zone Chair in September that includes the rules, checklists, forms and other information needed.
- d. Each Post chair contacts their local high school contacts to encourage participation by the high school(s).
- e. Local Posts sponsor and assist the contestants from their local high schools. (If no Post is near a high school, or if a contestant is not sponsored by a Post, then the Commission, upon request, will assist the contestant.)
- f. Each high school (or home school) selects a contestant in any reasonable manner to represent the high school.
- g. Each contestant must be certified at each level in order to advance to the next higher level. Certification must be made in writing or by e-mail to both the Commission Chair and the Chair of the next contest level. Certification forms are made available in hard copy and by electronic means at www.missourilegion.org/molegion_015.htm.
- h. The county Oratorical Chair holds a county contest of all contestants certified by the high schools (and home Schooled) located in their respective county. (The

posts in the county sponsor the county champion at the district contest.) The County Chair certifies the winner of the contest with the Department Headquarters Oratorical Chair.

- i. The District Oratorical Chair holds a district contest of all contestants certified by the County Chair. (The posts in each district sponsor the district winner at the zone contest.) The District Chair certifies the winner of the contest with the Department Headquarters Oratorical Chair.
- j. The Zone Oratorical Co-Chairs hold a Zone contest of all contestants certified by the District Chairs. There should only be one contestant from each District represented. There are rare exceptions to this on a case-by-case basis. The Zone Chairs certifies the winner of the contest with the Department Headquarters Oratorical Chair.

12. State Oratorical Finals Contest

- a. The Department Chair holds a Department contest at the Spring Conference. In the month before Spring Conference, the Department Chair arranges judges, escorts, and timekeepers. Commission members take key roles to orient the judges, coordinate the contestants, and otherwise make the Department contest a success.
- b. The four contest finalist attend a VIP luncheon in their honor prior to the State Finals being conducted.
- c. The Department Chair certifies the Department winner to National headquarters.

13. Annual Program Review

In May, the Department Chair reviews and up-dates the annual brochure, and the website, including the electronic certifications for high-school students, and home-school students.

14. Department Convention

In July, the Department Chair escorts and introduces the Department winner at the Department convention.

15. Department Oratorical Chairs Conference

During the last weekend of September, the Department Chair attends the Department Oratorical Chairs conference at National headquarters. The Missouri Department chair may be called upon to present instruction/information at the conference, and has served as a key member of the National steering committee for the conference.

16. Contestant Leads Received from National Headquarters

Throughout the fall, the Department Chair receives email leads from National headquarters. The Department Chair then emails each student, cc'ing the local chairs, and telling the basics of the contest to the students and teacher.

Annex A (Script for Conduct of the Department Oratorical Contest)

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the _____ annual, Department of Missouri finals of The American Legion’s High School Oratorical Scholarship program, a constitutional speech contest.

The American Legion High School Oratorical Contests were founded in the State of Missouri in 1934. This year marks the 83rd anniversary of this program in Missouri. The success of the program here made it a national program of The American Legion in 1937 (80 years). Several thousand boys and girls throughout the country now annually participate in these contests.

The American Legion is proud of this record of service to our citizens of tomorrow; the purpose of which is to create interest in and a better understanding of our form of government. Other objectives are to develop leadership, the ability to think and speak clearly and intelligently, and the preparation of our future citizens for the acceptance of the duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges of American citizenship. It is our sincere hope that the discussions you are about to hear will help you to better understand and appreciate our freedoms, so that while you now enjoy these privileges, you will also more faithfully help preserve them for posterity through proper discharge of your responsibilities as a citizen.

All bona fide high school students are eligible to participate in these contests, as detailed in the Missouri and National rules.

High schools may conduct a contest to select a student, or may select a student in any other manner desirable to represent their local high school. From that point on, the contestants progress through a process of contests. The various contests and awards are as follows:

<u>Contests</u>	<u>Awards</u>
High Schools	Bronze Medal
County or Group	Brooch
District (16 in Missouri)	Silver and Bronze Medal District \$250.00 Scholarship
Zone (4 in Missouri)	Gold, Silver, Bronze Medals
State	Gold, Silver, Bronze Medals Scholarships Totaling \$6,800
First Round (Quarter Final) – National	\$1,500 Scholarship per contestant

Second Round (Semi-Final) – National

\$1,500 Scholarship per contestant – The three Finalist do not receive this award

National Final

3 Scholarships totaling \$48,000

This afternoon, you will hear four speakers – each of whom won their respective Zone contest. I have several introductions, but I will make them after the contest ends. As you can see, the contestants are not in the room at this time. During the competition, they appear on stage only to deliver their speeches.

In fairness to the contestants, please do not applaud until the contest is completely over. Please do not take pictures. Please do not leave your seat while a contestant is speaking. If anyone has a pager, beeper, or cell phone of any kind, please turn it off now. [Pause and wait. Then repeat the preceding sentence to get the phones turned off.]

The speakers are introduced by number only. Prompting in any manner is not permitted. Doing so may disqualify the speaker. Each speaker will deliver a five to six minute prepared oration on some phase of the United States Constitution. The contestants are not allowed to use notes, a podium, or a sound system.

The contestants will be shown a time card at the five, and six minute marks of their oration. If the time limit is violated, a penalty of one point for each minute or fraction thereof, is assessed against the contestant's total score. There will be a short pause between contestants so the judges can make notes, or mark score cards.

Before introducing the last speaker, I will ask a member of the audience to draw an assigned topic from the four provided the students. All contestants will speak for three to five minutes on the same subject. The contestants will be shown a time card at the 3, 4, and five minute marks of their oration. If the time limit is violated, a penalty of one point for each minute or fraction thereof, is assessed against the contestant's total score.

When the last contestant has spoken for 5 minutes on the prepared oration, contestant Number 1 will be taken to a private room/location, given the topic card, and allowed five minutes to prepare his or her assigned topic presentation. I will read the assigned topic to you right before contestant Number 1 speaks.

If everyone is ready, I will call for Contestant Number 1.

This is Contestant Number 1. The title of his/her oration is:

The time for Contestant Number 1 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds.
There is (no) time penalty.

I will call for Contestant Number 2.

This is Contestant Number 2. The title of his/her oration is:

The time for Contestant Number 2 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds.
There is (no) time penalty.

I will call for Contestant Number 3.

This is Contestant Number 3. The title of his/her oration is:

The time for Contestant Number 3 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds.
There is (no) time penalty.

I will call for Contestant Number 4.

This is Contestant Number 4. The title of his/her oration is:

The time for Contestant Number 4 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds.
There is (no) time penalty.

WE NOW BEGIN THE ASSIGNED TOPIC PART OF THE CONTEST. For the last five minutes, Contestant Number 1 has been in a private room preparing. The topic the contestants will address is [read from the drawn slip title].

Now if everyone is ready, I will call for Contestant Number 1.

This is Contestant Number 1.

The time for Contestant Number 1 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds.

There is (no) time penalty.

I will call for Contestant Number 2.

This is Contestant Number 2.

The time for Contestant Number 2 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds.

There is (no) time penalty.

I will call for Contestant Number 3.

This is Contestant Number 3.

The time for Contestant Number 3 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds.

There is (no) time penalty.

I will call for Contestant Number 4.

This is Contestant Number 4.

The time for Contestant Number 4 is _____ minutes and _____ seconds.

There is (no) time penalty.

This concludes the competition part of the program.

I ask the judges and tabulators to please accompany me to the tabulation room for the determination of the contest results.

Wrap Up.

At this time, be sure the contestants are back in the room.

At this time, I would like to thank those who have made this contest possible.

First, our distinguished panel of judges: HAND OUT CERTIFICATES.

Will the members of the Department Oratorical Commission please stand. (Introduce each)

Will the Post, District and Zone Oratorical Chairmen please stand.

We thank the escorts:

1. _____, Post _____
2. _____, Post _____
3. _____, Post _____
4. _____, Post _____
5. _____, Post _____

The Time Keepers are:

1. _____, Post _____
2. _____, Post _____

Now, I will the Department Commander to join me in introducing the contestants, and presenting the awards.

Appearing as Contestant Number 1

NAME, CITY, GRADE, SCHOOL
_____ of _____ a _____ at _____ High School

Appearing as Contestant Number 2

NAME, CITY, GRADE, SCHOOL
_____ of _____ a _____ at _____ High School

Appearing as Contestant Number 3

NAME, CITY, GRADE, SCHOOL
_____ of _____ a _____ at _____ High School

Appearing as Contestant Number 4

NAME, CITY, GRADE, SCHOOL

_____ of _____ a _____ at _____ High School

Now the moment you have been waiting for – and for which the contestants have worked for months – the announcement of the winners. The winner of this contest will represent the State in the National Oratorical Contest to be held on April _____ in Indianapolis, Indiana. In the event that the winner of this contest cannot participate in the National Finals, the 2nd place winner will be the alternate representative for the Department of Missouri. The winner of today's contest will join me after the contest to discuss arrangements and certification for the National contest.

Placing 4th, and receiving a silver medal and Certificate of Appreciation

Placing 3rd, and receiving a silver medal and Certificate of Appreciation

Placing 2nd, and receiving a silver medal and Certificate of Appreciation

Placing 1st, and receiving a gold medal and Certificate of Appreciation

Contestants, please stay here on stage for a few minutes while the Legion (and any proud parents) take photographs.

This concludes the Oratorical Contest. Have a safe trip home!