# Superintendent’s Memo #005-20


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: January 10, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: Secretary of Education’s 2020 Essay Challenge for Virginia and United States Government Students

I am pleased to announce the Virginia Secretary of Education’s 2020 Essay Challenge. The Virginia Secretary of Education in partnership with the Virginia Commission on Civic Education (the Commission) would like to invite Virginia’s public high school seniors who are currently enrolled or previously completed a Virginia and United States Government course to enter the Essay Contest.

All public high school seniors across the Commonwealth will have the opportunity to demonstrate an understanding and knowledge of and commitment to engaged citizenship as it relates to the freedoms expressed in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America: “*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances*.”

The deadline for electronic submission is 5 p.m. Saturday, February 29, 2020. Winners will be announced on Monday, May 18, 2020. Secretary Atif Qarni will present the awards at a ceremony and celebration in June 2020. First Place – $500, Second Place – $250, and Third Place – $100.

All individuals who wish to enter must submit an Essay Challenge Entry Form (Attachment A) electronically to Senator David Marsden’s office by 5 p.m. Saturday, February 29, 2020, to civicsessaycontest@senate.virginia.gov. If you have any questions about the contest, please contact Chad Starzer at (804) 698-7453 or by email at cstarzer@senate.virginia.gov.

JFL/BM/jad

Attachments

A: [Secretary of Education's 2020 Essay Challenge Entry form](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2020/005-20a.docx) (Word)

B: [Secretary of Education's 2020 Essay Challenge prompt and score sheet](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2020/005-20b.docx) (Word)