**2026 GEAUGA COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION LAW DAY ESSAY COMPETITION**
***Sponsored by Petersen & Petersen, Attorneys at Law***

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the competition is to create awareness of Law Day and encourage greater interest in the Constitution and the rule of law among students.

**COMPETITION PRIZES**

One competition cash prize of **$500.00** will be awarded for the best entry as judged by the Law Day Essay Committee, comprised of representatives from the Geauga County Bar Association (GCBA) Law Day Committee and the GCBA President.

A competition cash prize of **$300.00** will be awarded for the second-place entry.

A competition cash prize of **$200.00** will be awarded for the third-place entry.

Each winner's teacher or home school advisor will also receive a **$100 donation** for school supplies.

**The prizes will be awarded during the GCBA Law Day luncheon at Guido's Event Center, 12809 Chillicothe Road, Chesterland, Ohio on April 24, 2026. The winners, their parents, and their faculty or home school advisors will be invited to the luncheon as guests of the GCBA.**

**ELIGIBILITY**

The competition is open to all high school students who reside in Geauga County or attend a school that has a presence in Geauga County such as a campus or facility. The GCBA shall have the right of first publication of the winning essay.

**AUTHORSHIP**

Each entry shall be the original work of a single individual and constitute an independent subject. The ideas and work reflected by each entry must be the author's own.

The author must:

- Perform all of the key tasks of analyzing and researching the topic;
- Formulate positions and arguments; and
- Write and revise the paper for themselves without using artificial intelligence platforms such as ChatGPT.

The author may:

- Inform another of the progress they have made in performing these tasks; and
- Accept a reasonable amount of responsive advice from academicians or practitioners in the field.

The student must avoid undue collaboration. (For example, the author may obtain a teacher's opinion that a detailed outline should be reorganized, or that a first draft unwisely omits to cover a subtopic or to raise and respond to criticisms of the author's premise.)

The author must limit the amount of such advice sought or received so that the final entry truly reflects the author's own ideas.

**SUBJECT MATTER AND LENGTH**.

**The 2026 Law Day theme is:**

# "THE RULE OF LAW & THE AMERICAN DREAM"

In 2026, the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, a document rooted in the ideals of liberty, equality, and self-government. Central to these ideals is the rule of law—the principle that no person is above the law and that laws protect the rights of the people. Law Day 2026's theme, "The Rule of Law and the American Dream," highlights how a fair and accountable legal system makes it possible for individuals to live freely, pursue opportunities, and work toward their goals. From the nation's founding to today, the rule of law has helped safeguard rights, promote justice, and support the American Dream for generations of Americans.

Choose ONE of the following questions to address in your essay:

**Option 1:**

**The rule of law is based on the principle that no one is above the law. Using examples from history or current events, describe how the rule of law has expanded or changed to include more Americans in the promise of the American Dream. Discuss what might happen if laws did not apply equally to everyone.**

**Option 2:**

**Identify a current issue or challenge in American society where the rule of law and the American Dream intersect. This might involve questions of equal access to justice, economic opportunity, education, voting rights, or other areas. Analyze how strengthening the rule of law could help address this challenge and expand opportunity.**

**Length: 3-pages, double spaced.**

**JUDGING**

The format of this competition has been selected to stimulate creativity of thought and research. Entries will be judged based on the following criteria: originality and creativity of topic treatment, quality of articulation and analysis of the constitutional provisions implicated, and technical quality of writing including organization, grammar, syntax, and form. The entries will be judged anonymously by members of the essay committee. All fields on the official entry form below must be completed.

1. The entry should be submitted to Kelly Sprague at Petersen & Petersen at the office at 10680 Mayfield Road, Chardon, Ohio 44024 or by email to KS@petersenlegal.com in PDF format. The e-mail should have the subject header "Attn: GCBA Law Day Essay Competition," and include in the body of the email a completed entry form shown below.
2. The contestant's name and other identifying markings such as school name are not to be on any copy of the submitted entry.
3. Ms. Sprague will assign a random number to each entry and record this number on all copies of each essay submitted.
4. Neither the contestant's identity nor his/her academic institution will be known to the essay committee members.
5. Each entrant may submit only one essay.
6. Contestants will receive confirmation of the entry. The winner(s) will be notified by mail of their selection.

**ENTRY DEADLINE.**

**Entries for the competition must be submitted by April 1, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.**

**OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM.**

Student's Name:

School or Home Schooled:

Grade:

Faculty or Home School Advisor and their email address:

Student's Street Address:

Student's Email Address:

Student's Phone Number: