



**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE**

Joel W. Solomon United States Courthouse
900 Georgia Avenue
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37402

TO SUPPORT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION

Every year, the Eastern District of Tennessee Civics Education and Outreach Committee partners with local chapters of the Federal Bar Association to sponsor local essay contests for high school students. The contests, which focus on some aspect of civics education, are open to public, private, and home-school high school students in all 41 counties in east Tennessee. The goal is both to educate students and to engage them in topics regarding our country's government, how the government functions, and our citizens' obligations to participate in government. Researching and learning about the Constitution and our government equips students to become adults who participate in government and respect and support the Constitution.

For this year's contest, students addressed the topic, "What Does It Mean to Support and Defend the Constitution?" The phrase "to support and defend" comes from the President's oath of office, set out in Article II of the Constitution. The Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court administers the oath, which states, in full: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Although the Constitution sets out the exact oath the President must take, it does not do so for other offices. It only provides in Article VI that "The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution." Over the years, the President's oath has been tailored for other offices and positions in federal, state, and local government, and for naturalized citizens.

The taking of an oath, especially publicly, not only impresses on the maker of the oath the seriousness of the undertaking, but also affirms to the public that the official takes his or her responsibilities seriously. The oath serves as a solemn commitment and confirmation that the oath taker will strive to do their best to perform the required duties of the office.

Two student winners of this year's essay contests have been announced. K'Lee Bryant is the winner for the northern divisions of the Court, with courthouses in Knoxville and Greeneville, and Lisa Lin is the winner for the southern divisions of the Court, with courthouses in Chattanooga and Winchester. K'Lee Bryant is a 2021 graduate of Greeneville High School and the daughter of Chadwick and Melissa Bryant. She will attend Tennessee Tech University in Cookeville, Tennessee, in the fall, where she plans to major in history. She also hopes to study foreign

languages and computer science. Lisa Lin is a rising tenth grader at Signal Mountain High School. Lisa was born in Chattanooga after her parents immigrated to the United States from China. She has won local spelling bees, is a track athlete, and aspires to being a doctor or a lawyer. Each winner received either a cash prize of \$500 or an iPod and case.

This was a weighty topic our two winners took on. They deserve our congratulations.

Curtis L. Collier
United States District Judge
Chair, Eastern District of Tennessee Civics and Outreach Committee

Carrie Brown Stefaniak
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