

## **1st Annual “Making Corruption History” High School Essay Contest**

Start date: February 15, 2026

Deadline for Submissions: May 15, 2026

Period for review: May 15 – June 7, 2026

Winners Announcement: June 10, 2026

### **Prompt**

Write an essay of under 3000 words on one of the following topics:

- The United States has witnessed many major political scandals and examples of political corruption, such as the Boss Tweed thefts (1870s), Teapot Dome (1920s), and Watergate (1970s). Write an essay about any example of political corruption in US history and why it matters.
- The United States has witnessed many brave individuals stand up to political corruption. Write an essay about one such person from either the past or present, whether they were effective, and what we can learn from their experiences.
- Write an essay that addresses one or more of the following questions: Why does political corruption matter? How do you recognize it? Does it affect the lives of young people, and if so, in what ways? What can be done about it?

### **Official Rules and Guidelines**

#### **1. Eligibility**

- The contest is open to students currently enrolled in **grades 9–12**.
- Students must attend a U.S. public, private, charter, or homeschool program recognized by their state.
- Each student may submit one original essay.

#### **2. Essay Topic**

- Essays must address the official contest prompt.
- Submissions should demonstrate **critical thinking, originality, and clarity of expression**.
- Essays that do not address the prompt may be disqualified.

### **3. Word Count**

- Essays must be **between 500 and 3,000 words**, unless otherwise specified.
- Word count does not include the title or bibliography (if applicable).
- Essays that exceed or fall below the word limit may be disqualified.

### **4. Formatting Requirements**

- Essays must be:
  - Typed and double-spaced
  - 12-point font (Times New Roman or similar standard font)
  - 1-inch margins on all sides
- Pages must be numbered.
- The student's **name, school, grade, and essay title** should appear on a separate cover page only (to allow for blind judging).

### **5. Originality and Academic Integrity**

- Essays must be the student's own original work.
- Plagiarism or the use of AI-generated content without acknowledgment is prohibited and will result in disqualification.
- Any sources used must be properly cited in a recognized format (MLA, APA, or Chicago).

### **6. Use of Sources**

- Students may use outside sources unless otherwise stated.
- All quotations, paraphrases, and ideas drawn from other works must be clearly cited.
- Excessive reliance on sources may weaken the evaluation of original thought.

### **7. Submission Guidelines**

- Essays must be submitted by the posted deadline (May 15, 2026).
- Late submissions will not be accepted.
- Submissions must be in **PDF or Word format**, unless otherwise specified.
- Essays must be submitted through the official online form: **[bit.ly/MPCEssay2026](https://bit.ly/MPCEssay2026)**

## 8. Judging Criteria

Essays will be evaluated based on:

- Relevance to the topic
- Originality and depth of thought
- Organization and clarity
- Grammar, spelling, and style
- Effective use of evidence (if applicable)

Judges' decisions are final.

## 9. Awards and Recognition

- Winners will be notified by email or through their school.
- Winning essays may be published or publicly shared with the student's permission.
- The **first-place winner will receive \$500**, and the **second-place winner will receive \$300**.
- Prizes, when offered, are non-transferable.

## 10. Rights and Permissions

- By submitting an essay, students grant the contest organizers the right to publish or reproduce the work for educational and promotional purposes, with proper credit to the author.

## 11. Code of Conduct

- Essays must not contain hateful, obscene, or threatening language.
- Submissions must comply with all applicable school and district policies.

## 12. Questions

- Questions regarding the contest should be directed to the contest organizers by the stated contact method.

## Contact Us



[info@museumofpoliticalcorruption.org](mailto:info@museumofpoliticalcorruption.org)



[www.museumofpoliticalcorruption.org/essay-contest](http://www.museumofpoliticalcorruption.org/essay-contest)