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The American Legion

For God and country

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Burlington, Wash Boy Sweeps to Victory

Earns \$18K Scholarship in American Legion Oratorical Constitutional Speech Contest

INDIANAPOLIS (April 17, 2016) – A home-schooled sophomore from Burlington, Wash., capped a busy weekend of competition in Indianapolis by earning an \$18,000 college scholarship and first place in The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program – “A Constitutional Speech Contest.” His winning oration was titled “Constitutional Literacy.”

Benjamin Crosby started the weekend as one of 54 state or territorial champions in the 79th annual contest. He advanced to the championship through three rounds of intense competition.

Solomon Brown, a high school senior from Greenwood, Miss., earned a \$16,000 college scholarship with a second place finish, while Cheyenne Mathews of Ketchikan, Alaska, earned a \$14,000 scholarship and finished third. The scholarships account for a small portion of post-secondary scholarships that The American Legion, the nation’s largest veterans organization, awards annually.

In his prepared oration, Crosby pointed out that Americans love their Constitution, but a recent survey shows that they don’t understand what’s in it. “More than 50 percent of Americans

do not know the number of U.S. senators. Only 6 percent can name all five rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, while 25 percent cannot even name one of those five rights.”

He added that military members, elected officials, judges and immigrants seeking citizenship must take an oath to support and defend the Constitution. “I believe it is high time for every citizen to make the same solemn oath, and to truly take it to heart. The preservation of liberty for our future generations of doctors, lawyers and paleontologists depends on it,” he concluded after previously mentioning his desire to become a paleontologist.

In each round of the weekend competition, orators delivered a rehearsed 8- to 10-minute address and a randomly assigned 3-to 5-minute oration on a constitutional topic, each without the benefit of notes and in front of a live audience, including the judges.

The 2.2-million member American Legion developed the contest to encourage young people to improve their communications skills and to study the U.S. Constitution. More than \$3 million in scholarships have been awarded over the history of the contest.

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