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To: [All Legion Leadership](#)
Subject: American Legion News Release: Nine Oratorical Contestants Advance to Semi-Finals
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nine high school orators survive first round, advance to national semi-finals this afternoon

INDIANAPOLIS (April 14, 2012) - Excitement ran high as 52 top high school orators pressed near the bracket-board hoping they would survive the first round of intense competition. The 52 represent nearly all states from across America, the District of Columbia, the Department of France and the Department of Puerto Rico. Each comes to The American Legion Oratorical Contest with one objective: leave with the \$18,000 college scholarship Sunday afternoon.

Representatives of California, Ohio, Minnesota, Indiana, Nebraska, Illinois, Virginia, Idaho and Colorado earned the opportunity to return to competition late this afternoon for the semi-finals. Only three will emerge from that round to the finals set for tomorrow.

Reaching the semi-finals are Audrea Taylor, El Cajon, Calif.; Caroline McKenzie, Wilmington, Ohio; John Donaldson IV, Eden Prairie, Minn.; Rebecca Frazer, Morgantown, Ind.; Alex Whitney, Minden, Neb.; Athena Saldanha, Schaumberg, Ill.; Ryan McDonald, Chesapeake, Va., Charles Baines, Meridian, Idaho; and Tayanna Todd, Monument, Colo.

This is the 75th annual competition, officially called The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program - "A Constitutional Speech Contest." The three contestants reaching the finals will leave Indianapolis, the headquarters city for the 2.4 million-member American Legion, with a large part of their college education expenses assured. Besides the \$18,000 top award, the first and second runners-up receive \$16,000 and \$14,000 scholarships respectively.

The nation's largest veterans organization holds the competition every year to encourage young Americans to improve their communications skills and to study the U.S. Constitution. More than

6,000 high school students begin competition annually at The American Legion post-community level.

Semi-finalists will be announced later this evening. Sunday's finals will be webcast live at 10 a.m. on www.legion.org. The website also includes a complete list of contestants by state.

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NOTE: Phone interviews with the nine semi-finalists can be arranged by contacting the individuals above. Interview time will follow the competition at approximately 6 p.m. EST. Contestants will have access to phones to call media.