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Birmingham, H.S. Junior Sweeps to Victory, Earns $25K Scholarship in American Legion Oratorical Contest

INDIANAPOLIS (April 24, 2022) – A junior from Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham capped a busy weekend of competition in Indianapolis by earning a $25,000 college scholarship and first place in The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program – "A Constitutional Speech Contest." Emma Noble's winning prepared oration was titled "The Power of the Executive Order: Because I said so."

Noble, who lives in Birmingham, started the weekend as one of 50 state or department champions in the 83rd annual contest. She advanced to the championship through three rounds of intense competition. Noble was sponsored by American Legion Post 555 in Pelham, Ala.

Ashley Tuell, a senior from Johnson City, Tenn., earned a $22,500 college scholarship with a second-place finish, while Jackson Boone, a 12th grade student from Calvert City, Ky., earned $20,000 and third place in the competition. The scholarships account for a small portion of post-secondary scholarships that The American Legion, the nation's largest veterans organization, awards annually.

In her prepared oration, Noble compared the use of presidential executive orders to the common parental admonishment of authority "because I said so." She pointed out positive examples of its use, such as the Emancipation Proclamation and the desegregation of the military but also mentioned that it was used by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to establish Japanese American internment camps during World War II.

Noble encouraged people to consider the use of executive orders when they vote. "Executive orders are an extremely valuable tool because they are much faster than passing a law through the legislative branch; however, they are not trivial to undo so you must have confidence in the person making them. It is a citizen's responsibility to vote. Not only that, but to vote for someone you trust with the power of executive orders. Because I said so."

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 nearly 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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