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Indianapolis High School Senior Wins American Legion Oratoricals

Earns $25K Scholarship, National Championship

INDIANAPOLIS (April 23, 2023) – A home-schooled senior from Indianapolis capped a busy weekend of competition in her home city by earning a $25,000 college scholarship and first place in The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program – "A Constitutional Speech Contest." Haley Bock's winning prepared oration was titled "The Black Hole of American Democracy: American Territories are Where Voting Rights Vanish."

Bock started the weekend as one of 49 state or department champions in the 84th annual contest. She advanced to the championship through three rounds of intense competition. She was sponsored by American Legion Post 3 in Indianapolis.

Ian Chung, a senior from Vestal, N.Y., earned a $22,500 college scholarship with a second-place finish, while Emma Johnson, an 11th grade student from Powell, Wyo., 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, Bock opened her remarks about Luis Segovia, a U.S. citizen and Guam resident who served tour tours in Iraq and Afghanistan with the Illinois National Guard.

"Luis Segovia was willing to give his life for his country," she said. "He protected Iraqi citizens' right to vote. But back home in America, Luis, along with four million residents of the American territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands were denied their right to vote."

"They're calling out but they've yet to be heard," she concluded. "So, who will give them their voice? When will we all speak out, rise together, and grant those the rights they too have fought for and deserve?"

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 1.7-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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Media Contact: John Raughter (317) 630-1350, jraughter@legion.org.