

Greetings,

You are invited to apply for the annual Mound City Bar Foundation (MCBF) Law Student Scholarship Essay Contest, which will award scholarships totaling up to \$5,000 to law students in attendance at Missouri and Southern Illinois law schools. The deadline to apply with supporting documents is **January 21, 2019, at 11:59 p.m. (CST)**.

OFFICIAL RULES FOR ANNUAL MCBF SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY CONTEST

ESSAY TOPIC QUESTION

The US [Voting Rights Act](#), which outlawed legal barriers preventing African American voters from casting ballots, was signed into law on Aug. 6, 1965. On the occasion of its 50th anniversary, and one day after a federal appeals court ruled that a Texas law violates part of the act, its legacy is being debated by figures from across the political spectrum.

The Voting Rights Act was signed almost a century after the ratification of the 15th Amendment to the US Constitution, which declared that the right to vote must not be denied by the federal government or by any state "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Despite having been granted the constitutional [right to vote](#), the ability for African Americans to exercise that right was infringed by numerous laws enacted in southern states after the Civil War, including requirements to pass literacy tests, the introduction of poll taxes and vouchers of "good character," and the barring of black voters for supposed "crimes of moral turpitude." Following the 15th Amendment's ratification in 1870, the percentage of eligible black voters in Mississippi who were registered to vote dropped from 90% to about 6% in 1892. The percentage of voting-age blacks in the south who were registered to vote dropped to about 3% by 1940.

The burgeoning civil rights movement fought to oppose such disenfranchisement laws during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The efforts culminated on Mar. 7, 1965, when a planned march from Selma to Montgomery Alabama was disrupted when the protesters were confronted by state troopers, who fired tear gas into the crowd and attacked the marchers with nightsticks and whips. The national attention garnered by the incident hastened the progress of the nascent Voting Rights Act, which was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson five months later. Within one year, 302,000 previously disenfranchised Americans were registered to vote.

One of the act's stipulations was that so-called "special coverage" states (states with a history of discrimination against African American voters) were required to secure "pre-clearance" from the federal government before making changes to their election or voting processes. This requirement was ruled unconstitutional and no longer necessary by the US Supreme Court on June 25, 2013. The ruling was controversial, and its implications are still being fiercely debated as the Voting Rights Act turns 50.

Following the Supreme Court's decision, several states have enacted voter ID laws and other measures that some see as renewed efforts to suppress the minority vote. On Aug. 5, 2015, the Fifth US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Texas' voter ID law violates the Voting Rights Act by discriminating against African American and Latino voters. The law prohibited people from voting if they could not show an approved government-issued photo ID. There was no exception for people who could not afford an ID, and government employee IDs and IDs from state colleges were not acceptable under the law.

With many of the barriers that previously existed that worked to deny African Americans the right to vote no longer being an issue, are the protections afforded pursuant to the Voting Rights Act still needed and should attempts to remove voter protections be of concern?

ELIGIBILITY

- 1Ls, 2Ls, and 3Ls are all eligible to enter.
- Must be in enrolled and in academic good standing at Saint Louis University, Washington University in St. Louis University, University of Missouri or Southern Illinois law schools, as evidenced by a letter written on law school letterhead from the Registrar's Office or the Dean of Students Office.

ESSAY REQUIREMENTS

- Essay must be 3-5 typewritten pages.
- Essay must be typed in black ink, 12-point font, double-spaced on white 8½ x 11 inch paper with 1-inch margins on the entire document.
- Each essay page must be numbered and include the name of applicant.
- Essay must be accompanied by a Cover sheet (see specifications below).
- Essay must follow Blue Book citation rules.
- Essay must cite legal authority in support of arguments including but not limited to, case law, statutes or public policy.

GRADING CRITERIA

- Entries will be judged on the appropriate use of legal and non-legal information sources; content (spelling, grammar, organization and logical thought); originality (creativity and persuasiveness); and clarity of argument.
- Entries will also be judged by the applicant's commitment to community service (current involvement in community or professional organizations as demonstrated on Resume).
- Cover Sheet: Each applicant must attach a cover sheet which includes the following information: First and Last Name, Mailing Address, Email Address, Phone Number, Name of Law School, Year in Law School, and Number of Submitted Pages (including cover sheet). Each page of the essay must also include the applicant's name.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- Completed essay
- Entries must be accompanied by a certificate of good standing. Law student law school transcript
- Law student law school transcript
- Law student resume
- Cover sheet

- Return all documentation to MCBFScholarshipCommittee@gmail.com on or before January 21, 2019, at 11:59 p.m. (CST).

PRIZES

Winners will be chosen based on the essay, resume and law school transcript. Winners will be notified via email. Scholarship monies will be awarded at the 15th Annual Hon. Scovel T. Richardson Scholarship Dinner on Saturday, June 29, 2019. Winners must be available to accept their awards at the dinner absent extenuating circumstances.

Greetings,

The Mound City Bar Foundation (MCBF) Scholarship Committee asks that you share the following and attached information with your law students regarding MCBF's annual Scholarship Competition. The deadline for submissions is January 21, 2019 (11:59 p.m. – CST).

If any additional information is required, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you.

*Richard G. Hughes
MCBF Scholarship Committee, Chair*