

April 18, 2022  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, today announces the selection of three essays from fifth and sixth grade classes in the nine-county District for recognition in the “What the rule of law means to me” essay contest. The Third Circuit Court of Appeals announced this essay contest in mid-January 2022 attracting essays from throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and the United States Virgin Islands. Twenty-two fifth and sixth grade classes throughout Eastern Pennsylvania submitted class essays. The Court’s review committee evaluated the essays. The Committee selected the attached fifth grade essay from William Penn Charter School as the winner. The Court also selected the attached essays from a sixth grade class at The Baldwin School and a fifth grade class at Merion Elementary School as the additional finalists. The students offered thoughts in a concise essay as to how the Rule of Law and judicial independence affects them.

The Court will recognize the teachers, students and parents in these classes at a special recognition ceremony before the full Court on Tuesday, May 10, 2022 at 10:00 A.M. in the Ceremonial Courtroom of the U.S Courthouse at 601 Market Street in Philadelphia. The Court thanks the twenty-two classes who submitted essays in the first year of the program and looks forward to continuing its outreach to students and adults on the importance of the rule of law and judicial independence.

*Further questions should be directed to Kate Barkman, Clerk of the Court, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.*  
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## What the Rule of Law Means to Me

“The clearest way to show what the rule of law means to us in everyday life is to recall what has happened when there is no rule of law,” stated our former President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The rule of law, established in Greece, is a concept dating as far back as 500 BCE. It was not widely embraced until 1215 when the Magna Carta was published in England. It was created to prevent chaos and to protect abuse by those in power, such as the king. The Magna Carta was a document consisting of rights and privileges, partly influencing the U.S. Constitution. The rule of law consists of four main ideas: accountability, justice, transparency, and equality before the law. These four pillars ensure that there is order and that disputes are decided fairly, not by wealth, social background, ethnicity, or personal connections. Without the rule of law, societies would be in chaos. But with the rule of law, societies would thrive.

To me, the rule of law is the basis of living my everyday life safely and peacefully. It allows me to be confident that there are rules that protect me and when those rules are applied, they will be applied fairly. For instance, during the pandemic, a rule was established at my school requiring that masks be worn indoors. This rule was implemented to protect everyone from contracting COVID-19. It was applied fairly despite people’s social status, wealth, race, religion or position at the school. If this rule was not created and followed, my school community would not have stayed as safe and healthy as it did.

To our country, the rule of law stands as a basic element of our democracy. Without the rule of law, our democracy would collapse, chaos would prevail, and our country would fail to grow and thrive. The rule of law is especially important for a country as diverse as ours, since one of the only things that really connects us all is our dedication to the ideas in the Constitution. For example, one foundation of democracy is fair elections. There are many rules that apply before, during and after an election. These ensure an election’s accuracy and fairness.

In our world, the rule of law stands as a basic factor of friendly and equitable relationships between countries. It sustains peace and creates allies among nations. When the rule of law is not followed, war breaks out and peace is at risk. The Ukrainian and Russian conflict demonstrates what can happen when there is no rule of law or when the rule of law is not followed.

In conclusion, the rule of law promotes stable societies and growth in civilizations across the world. It is the foundation of a future full of opportunities and peace for all. As Dr. Martin Luther King once said: “True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice.”

**Rule of Law Essay**  
**Merion Elementary School**

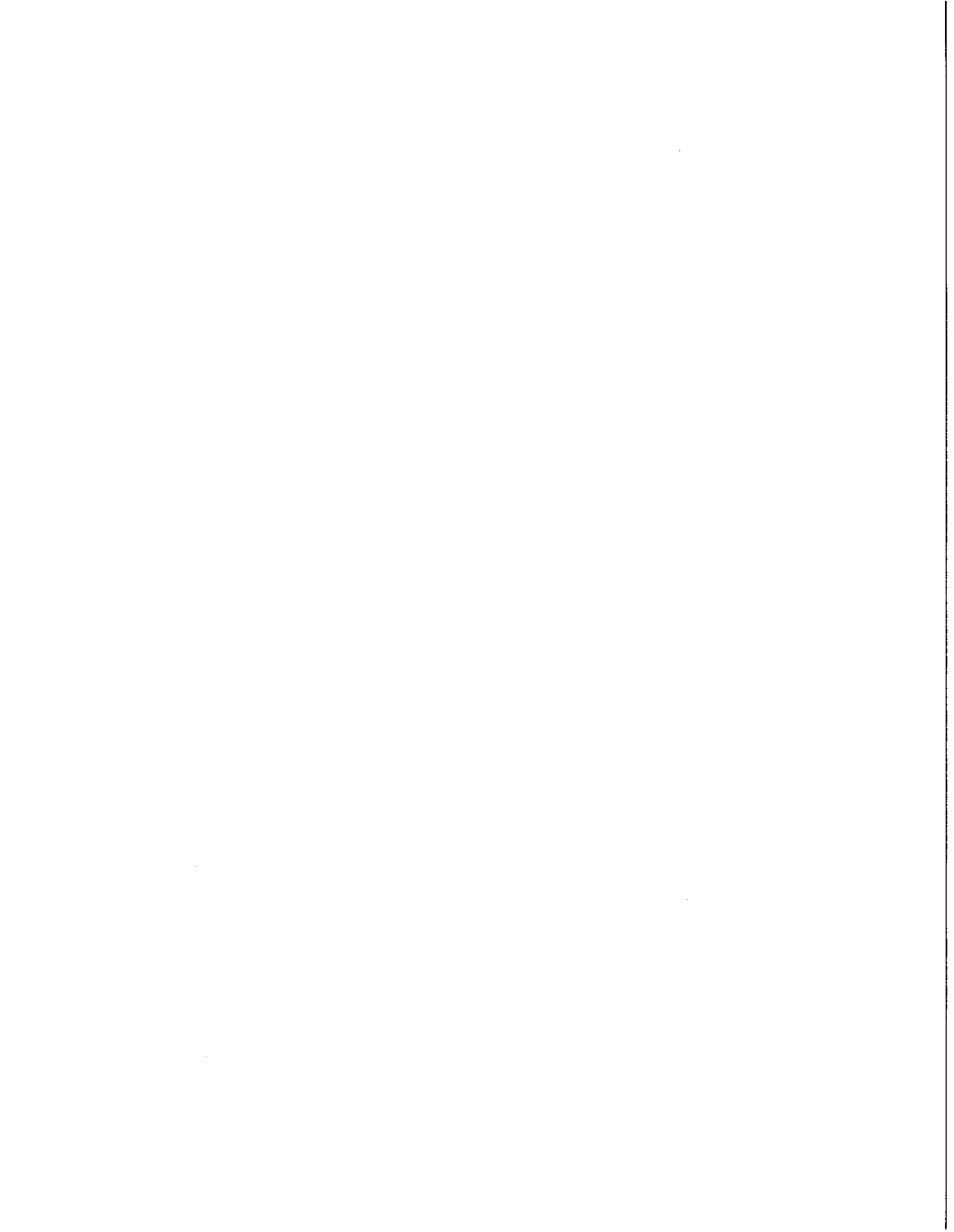
The beliefs of the Founding Fathers are stated in our Constitution, “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.” The principles that our country was founded on are best exemplified in the Rule of Law and are a crucial component of our democracy. The Rule of Law impacts every American because it represents safety, trust, and equality. Without it, our lives would be significantly different. For a free society to be successful its citizens must know what the rules are, understand what they mean, and know the consequences if the rules are broken. The Rule of Law ensures that citizens in the United States can go out in public without fear of discrimination, theft, or abuse. The Rule of Law enables our democracy, courts, and each person in our nation to function with confidence that no person is above the law and everyone has access to equal justice.

The Rule of Law impacts every aspect of our lives. It provides assurance to some, safety to others, and represents equality for all. It provides us with assurance that when we cross the street there are traffic laws we all agree to follow, when we buy our food there are laws that protect our safety, and when we go to school we are treated equally. Why is this so important? The rules that everyone must follow preserve and safeguard our way of life. During the pandemic, rules were made for mask mandates and vaccination guidelines which were enforced to ensure public health. The 14th Amendment was established to protect citizens rights and “equal protection of the laws.” In Brown v. Board of Education, the court ruled that schools could not discriminate based on the color of your skin, and that separate was not equal. These examples demonstrate that without the Rule of Law chaos and injustice can arise. We need the Rule of Law to protect each and every student in our schools.

In our country the Rule of Law stipulates that no person is above the law and every citizen has the right to equal justice. Equal justice is available when our laws are predictable, consistent, stable,

and just. Without this fundamental principle, the government would have all the power, people would be taken advantage of, and our country would crumble into anarchy. The Rule of Law protects our freedom and ensures that we have a functional and productive society, a court system that maintains order, and that everyone is treated equally. At the heart of the Rule of Law is the ability of our country to function as a vibrant democracy where Americans have rights and privileges and where legal order prevails. John Adams once described a republic as, "A government of laws, and not of men." This is the great promise of the Rule of Law under our Constitution. Each citizen is judged and held accountable to the same rules. The courts ensure that rules are followed and there are consequences for those who violate the law. The ideal that all citizens are treated equally is the bedrock of our democracy. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in his letter from a Birmingham jail, "But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here." King fought so that everyone would be treated fairly by the law. The belief that everyone gets fair treatment in the courts is best represented in United States v. Nixon. The president received the same treatment under the law that any citizen could expect and was held accountable for his actions. We are a country where the Rule of Law protects our basic ideal that no man is above the law and everyone should be treated fairly and equally.

The Rule of Law is an exceptionally powerful ideal that is a treasure to our country and is the keystone to our democracy. Our free and independent courts are the envy of other countries because of the protections that are afforded our citizens as outlined in our Constitution. Theodore Roosevelt once said, "No man is above the law and no man is below it; nor do we ask any man's permission when we ask him to obey it." He strongly believed that the Rule of Law meant that citizens be treated equally and fairly. Our class believes that the Rule of Law is what makes our nation the envy of countries around the world. We concur with Justice Sonia Sotomayor when she said, "I firmly believe in the rule of law as the foundation for all of our basic rights."



Teacher: Ms. Bridget Doherty

The rule of law is freedom and justice for all. It has four main concepts, the government is bound by the law, the law must come from the people, the law must be publicly known, and the law protects the rights of the minority. The rule of law originates in ancient Greece when the famous philosopher Aristotle wrote his book, Politics. He asks whether it is best to be ruled by a good leader or good laws. Aristotle concludes that laws are more valuable to society than leaders because they can be applied over time to many situations. Rule of law and its four main concepts have ancient origins and are still essential for civilization.

An essential part of the rule of law is that no one is above the law including the government, and the laws are applied equally to everyone. In the courts, every case is treated equally; the people in the case's gender, race, and ethnicity do not affect the application of the law. For example, when judges are sworn into the court, they must promise to treat people equally and fairly in their cases. Wealth, race, and ethnicity do not matter in the rule of law, everyone must follow the law.

Rule of law protects the minority. The first amendment to the Constitution gives everyone fundamental rights, including freedom of speech, press, and religion. This ensures that the majority cannot deprive the minority of their fundamental rights. Through this amendment, the minority is protected. Without the protection of the minority rights, the minority would be overshadowed and the majority would decide the laws.

Thirdly, the rule of law makes sure that the law represents the desires of the citizens. The government officials who create laws are elected by the people. This ensures that the laws are reasonable and wanted. For example, Congress is elected and makes the laws. Through this representative government, the people's voices are heard and their needs are reflected. Without election laws, leaders would be able to make laws that benefited them, not the people.

Lastly, the rule of law states that the law must be publicly known. Citizens should know their charges, rights, and privileges. Without public laws, people would be charged with breaking laws that they have never heard of before. This part of the rule of law ensures that citizens know laws so that they can follow and be held accountable to them. The publicity of laws and the judicial system is critical in society.

The rule of law gives fairness, peace, and accountability to the law. It is a public and reliable system in which rule-breakers are punished, and it protects freedoms. It marks the fine line between expressing rights and hurting others. It allows freedoms but prevents the breaking of the law. The rule of law means that nobody is above the law and the minority is protected. Through these four concepts, the rule of law is essential to a successful civilization.