



2025-26

## New Jersey History Day Special Awards Program

The New Jersey History Day (NJHD) contest program invites history organizations, affinity groups, businesses, and other interested groups to sponsor Special Awards on topics related to their missions. The Special Awards program helps support the operation of the New Jersey History Day program, while offering organizations an opportunity to raise awareness of your work and connect with young people who value history. Special Awards can encourage students to select topics that explore an aspect of history you care about, and honor students who complete exceptional work.

### Becoming a Special Award Sponsor

1. **Get in touch!** Prospective sponsors should get in touch with New Jersey History Day to indicate your interest in sponsoring. Begin by writing to: [njhistoryday@wpunj.org](mailto:njhistoryday@wpunj.org).
2. **Develop a proposal:** Our staff will work with you to understand the topics that interest you and help develop your award eligibility criteria, judging criteria, and prize offerings into a proposal.
3. **Approval:** The New Jersey History Day Advisory Board reviews all proposals and makes recommendations to accept or decline special awards. The State Coordinator has final approval.
4. **Agreement:** Upon approval, we will complete a Special Prize Agreement outlining mutual expectations, prize description, criteria, and annual sponsorship fee. Agreements can be renewed annually as long as both parties agree. Agreements must be renewed by November 1 to be included in student registration materials.

### Sponsorship Fee

New Jersey History Day requests a \$50 sponsorship fee from participating organizations. This fee helps to offset administrative costs for the prize program, and supports the general operations of NJHD.

### Promotion

When completing the Agreement, we will request your logo and information about your organization to share on contest materials. Your Special Award will be advertised on our website, social media channels, and on the student contest registration portal.

### Eligibility Criteria

Special Award sponsors can propose eligibility criteria for their awards. Criteria should be clear and precise, making it easy for students to understand what would and would not qualify. Sample criteria

can be found at the end of this document. Please consider the following when determining how to structure your award:

- **Number of Prizes:** Sponsors may offer a single prize, or more than one prize (such as first and second place, or one prize each in the Junior Division and Senior Division).
- **Category:** Students compete in one of five categories: Documentary, Exhibit, Performance, Paper, and Website. Sponsors may choose to offer prizes in one category only, or across all categories.
- **Division:** Students compete in either the Junior Division (Grades 6-8) or Senior Division (**Grades 9-12**). Sponsors offering more than one award may choose to offer both Junior and Senior awards. Those offering a single prize should specify *either* the Junior or Senior Division, to prevent students competing across divisions for a single prize.

## Prizes

NJHD provides medals to be given to Special Award winners. In addition to the medal, Special Awards should be accompanied by prizes that are meaningful for students. An award certificate from your organization is welcome, but should not be the only prize. Prize suggestions include:

- **In-kind prizes:** Books, memberships, tickets/access to special tours or events, items featuring your logo, and/or opportunities to present at another venue such as a meeting of your organization.
- **Monetary prizes:** We ask that monetary prizes meet a minimum of \$25 per person. Prizes should be given in the form of a check; no cash prizes can be accepted. Please note: Students compete both individually and in groups of up to five students. We recommend that prizes be offered per person for up to five people, rather than as a single item or a lump sum that must be divided.

New Jersey History Day collects prizes in advance to stage for the Awards Ceremony. **Prizes and prize checks must be sent to or dropped off with New Jersey History Day by Friday, April 24, 2026.** If prizes are not present on contest day, we will not present the award.

## Nomination Process

Special Awards opportunities are listed in the contest registration system. Students may self-nominate their entry for up to two Special Awards. Staff, Contest Judges, and Special Award Judges can also nominate entries during contest preparation.

If there are no suitable nominations, you may choose not to award a prize that year. We will notify the sponsors and offer to refund the prize and sponsorship fee, or carry it over to the next year.

## Judging

Special Award sponsors are invited to send judges from their organizations to select award winners at the contest. If sponsors are unable to send judges, NJHD will designate Special Award judges to evaluate nominated entries.

Special Award judging takes place on Contest Day. To ensure fairness for everyone, Special Award judging must remain separate from category judging. Special Award Judges review each entry's Process

Paper and Annotated Bibliography, then view the student project itself when possible. Special Awards are judged on content only, without student interviews or other input.

There are no student interviews or Q&A opportunities for Special Awards. Special Award judges are welcome to participate in student presentations as spectators only – please do not ask questions or comment on student projects.

## Award Presentation

Sponsors are invited to attend the awards ceremony to present the medals (provided by NJHD) and prize packets. Due to strict time constraints, award presentation does not include a speaking opportunity.

## Student Contact Information

NJHD does not provide contact information for students, including those who win Special Awards, without the permission of their parents or guardians. A sponsor may request this information but recognizes that permission may or may not be granted.

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## Sample Award Criteria

**Florida: Archival Research Award:** Sponsored by the Friends of the State Library and Archives of Florida Inc. This prize is awarded to an outstanding entry on a Florida topic incorporating original records obtained from archival collections residing in a Florida archive, university library, historical society or similar institution. Digital collections maintained by these institutions also qualify

**Minnesota: Holocaust History Award:** Sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas. Award: Two \$100 prizes Entries must relate to a significant event or development taking place in Europe between 1933-1949 that led to or contributed to the events of the Holocaust.

**Ohio: Women in Government Award:** The Ohio Women in Government Award is sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Ohio for outstanding Ohio History Day projects, in any category, that focus on the women's suffrage movement in Ohio and/or an Ohio woman leader in government. Project must be well-researched and include accurate citations in the bibliography. Project may be a paper, exhibit, performance, documentary, or website.

**Oklahoma: Todd Family Oral History Award:** This prize is awarded to two Oklahoma National History Day senior division entries with the best oral history interview with a US veteran. Oral histories must be conducted by students. Student awards are \$1,000 for first place and \$500 for second place.

**Virginia: The 1882 Foundation History Award:** In 1882, Congress passed and President Arthur signed into law the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first significant law restricting immigration into the United States. To encourage research into this important topic, the 1882 Foundation will present one \$250 award to a project in either the Junior or Senior Division that explores the impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act, or other exclusionary immigration policies in American history. The 1882 Foundation encourages projects

that reflect creativity in approach and design, rely on primary sources, and highlight overlooked or forgotten stories of Asian Americans. Projects should also examine how the past history of exclusion relates to contemporary events.