

# Contest 11:

## Press Law and Ethics

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- This test will assess your knowledge and understanding of scholastic press law and ethics.

- Write your response to the prompt using any word processing program you choose.

- Next, convert the file to a PDF for submission.

- Entries must be uploaded by 6 p.m. CDT Oct. 18, 2021.

DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME OR SCHOOL NAME ON YOUR ENTRY.

### WHAT JUDGES LOOK FOR

- Evidence of thorough research and application of the law to the prompt

- A comprehensive discussion of any ethical issues involved

- Adherence to the same standards of grammar and logical expression you would expect in a journalistic piece

- Judges will look for a comprehensive understanding of media law and ethics as they apply to the scholastic media. They will also evaluate the contestants' ability to apply the law and Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics to situations.

### Part 1: Short Essay Response – 25 pts.

**Note:** Choose one question to answer. Include the letter of the question at the beginning of your response so the judges know which question you chose. For these questions, assume you are the editor-in-chief of your student media organization. Your answer should acknowledge both the legal and ethical aspects of your response.

A. Four sophomores at your high school have been arrested and accused of blowing up mailboxes in a neighborhood near the school. This is both a felony and a federal crime. A police report has been filed, and the students have been formally charged with the crimes. You have confirmed the students' names and ages through the police report, charging documents and several other sources. Each of the students is a minor. Is this a story that belongs in your school publication? If so, do you name the students? Explain.

**Please limit your response to roughly 250 words.**

Or ...

B. A reporter on your publication comes to you with a screenshot of a clearly racist social media post that appears to have come from an account belonging to your school's principal. The reporter says he took the screenshot himself, but that the post has since been deleted. Your principal has been on the forefront of several diversity initiatives in your school district, and has even been honored for her work addressing equity and combating racism. Is this a story that you intend to pursue? If so, what are your steps prior to publication? If it's not a story, why isn't it?

**Please limit your response to roughly 250 words.**

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### Part 2: Longer Essay – 50 points

**Note:** For this question, assume you are the editor-in-chief of your student media organization. Your answer should acknowledge both the legal and ethical aspects of your response.

A new assistant principal at your school asks to meet with you and the leadership staff of the newspaper, yearbook, broadcast program and publication website. In the meeting she states that the primary role of student media is to make sure that you're "putting the school's best foot forward in the community" and that any negative stories only "cause harm" to the school and your fellow students. She says unless your coverage changes to reflect her philosophy, the media programs will face possible elimination next year. She ends the meeting without giving any student a chance to respond to her edict. How do you respond? What steps will you take to keep student media alive and well at your school?

**Please limit your response to no more than 400 words.**