



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: September 15, 2017
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: Seeking Nominations (High School Seniors) for the 2018 Presidential Scholars Program

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is seeking nominations of high school seniors for the 2018 Presidential Scholars Program (General Category). Each Chief State School Officer (CSSO) may nominate up to ten male and ten female candidates. Students selected as finalist for the Presidential Scholars Program are invited to participate in a National Recognition Program in Washington, D.C. They will receive an all-expense paid trip to our nation's Capital to meet with government officials, educators, and other accomplished people. Finally, they will be awarded the U.S. Presidential Scholars medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House.

Each Superintendent's Region is asked to select one female and one male student candidate (*Please note that Region 4 may submit two female and two male student candidates due to the large student population*). We encourage you to nominate students who demonstrate outstanding scholarship, but who might not otherwise be nominated through the current SAT/ACT, Arts, or CTE recognition processes.

State Superintendent Nomination Process:

- We recommend that high school principals submit the *VDOE Student Nomination Form* to their Division Superintendent/Designee. Forms collected at the Division level will then be forwarded to the Superintendent's Region for further consideration.
- Each Superintendent's Region should establish its own process to select one female and one male regional nominee (*Region 4 may select two female and two male nominees*) based on the criteria identified below:
 - Are a high school senior, graduating between January and June of 2018
 - Are a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident
 - Are enrolled in a Virginia public school
 - Exhibit outstanding scholarship
 - May have overcome special challenges or hurdles while still achieving high academic success

Important information to consider when developing your regional selection process:

The Presidential Scholars Program reviewers will be considering the following categories when evaluating the nominees at the Semifinalist and Scholar evaluation levels:

- *Involvement and Service (in school and community)*
- *Leadership and Character*
- *Writing samples*
- *Academic achievements*
- *Discretionary points for extraordinary achievement, heavy workload, family responsibilities, or obstacles overcome*

Please note: Application for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program is by invitation only. Students may not apply individually to the program or be nominated (outside of the above process).

- **Regional nominations must be submitted to the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction no later than close of business November 3, 2017.** Once the State Superintendent submits Virginia's nominations, the Commission on Presidential Scholars will contact the student and invite them to apply for 2018 Presidential Scholars Program.
- All nominees will be announced and invited to apply in mid-January 2018 by the U.S. Presidential Scholars program office. Completed applications will be due in February 2018, and Scholars will be announced at the beginning of May 2018.

The Presidential Scholars Program:

The [U.S. Presidential Scholars Program](#) was established in 1964, by executive order of the President, to recognize and honor some of our nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors. In 1979, the program was extended to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, creative and performing arts. In 2015, the program was again extended to recognize students who demonstrate ability and accomplishment in career and technical education fields. Each year, up to 161 students are named as Presidential Scholars, one of the nation's highest honors for high school students.

- All high school seniors graduating between January and June of 2018, who are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents and who attend public, parochial, or independent schools, as well as those who are home-schooled, are eligible participate in this program.
- Application for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program is by invitation only. Students may not apply individually to the program or be nominated (outside of the above process).
- A review committee of qualified individuals experienced in secondary and post-secondary education evaluates candidates on their academic achievement, personal characteristics, leadership and service activities, and an analysis of their essay. Approximately 800 candidates are named semifinalists and forwarded to the Commission for further review.
- In April, the Commission on Presidential Scholars reviews the applications of all semifinalists based on the same criteria used by the review committee. The Commission selects up to 161 U.S. Presidential Scholars each year. All scholars are honored for their accomplishments during the National Recognition Program, held in June in Washington, D.C.
- The candidates will go through the application process, and as in the past, the 2018 U.S. Presidential Scholars will be selected by the Commission on Presidential Scholars and receive the Presidential Scholars Medallion at a ceremony in their honor in Washington, DC.
- U.S. Presidential Scholars are guests of the Commission during the National Recognition Program and enjoy an expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with government officials, educators, and other accomplished people. To commemorate their achievement, the Scholars are awarded the U.S. Presidential Scholars medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House.

The VDOE Presidential Scholars Nomination Form is attached and must be returned to the Virginia Department of Education, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, no later than Friday, November 3, 2017. For additional information please contact Ms. Leah Dozier Walker, Community and Minority Affairs Liaison, by email at Leah.Walker@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-3304.

SRS/LDW

Attachments:

- A. [VDOE 2018 Presidential Scholars Nomination Form](#) (Printable PDF)
 - B. [VDOE 2018 Presidential Scholars Nomination Form](#) (Electronic Fillable PDF)
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Links:

[U.S. Presidential Scholars Program](#) ↗

[U.S. Presidential Scholars Program FAQ](#) ↗

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