

Writing Competition 2026

Rules concerning the competition are as follows:

1. **ELIGIBILITY:** The competition is open to any student age 21 years or older enrolled in an ABA-accredited law school during the academic years 2025 and 2026 of the competition who is a legal resident of the United States. Directors, officers and employees of the ABA and their immediate family or household members are not eligible.
2. **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:** All submissions must be the original work of the entrant. Any relevant article or essay may be submitted for the competition, including writing submitted for academic credit. Submissions must not have been previously published in any media. Only one essay, per competition theme, may be submitted by each entrant.

Content

- a. Entries for the Forum on Construction Law Student Writing Competition: Papers should address a topical issue of interest to the construction industry. All authors must certify that all work submitted is the author's work product without substantial editing by others or the use of artificial intelligence.
- b. Papers prepared for law school credit are eligible for entry in the competition. Articles prepared for law review, or publication elsewhere, are eligible for the competition as well. Papers written by more than one author (i.e., co-authors) are not acceptable.
- c. Law professors may submit their students' submission directly to The Forum for consideration.
- d. The decision of whether a particular essay qualifies as to subject matter is entirely within the discretion of The Forum.

Format

- a. The format of the articles should conform to either of The Forum's two publications, The Construction Lawyer (law journal format) or Under Construction (newsletter format with articles of 1000-2000 words). Format guidelines for The Construction Lawyer and Under Construction are posted on The Forum's website.
- b. Articles must be in Microsoft Word format. The Forum prefers The Bluebook-® citation style and requires it for publication. However, the judges will not consider citation form in their evaluation.
- c. The following information must be presented on the title page: title; author's name; address, telephone number, email address; and law school.

Submissions

- a. Articles must be submitted by e-mail to the following: Shannon Costis, American Bar Association (Shannon.costis@americanbar.org) and Missy Griffin (mgriffin@gibbsgiden.com).
 - b. Participants acknowledge that ABA will not return any submitted American Bar Association Forum on Construction Law Writing Competition 2026 essay entries. All participants retain full copyright to their entries except that winners are required to license certain rights to the ABA (see paragraph 7 below) as a condition of entry.
3. **SELECTION AND NOTIFICATION OF WINNERS:** The format of this competition has been selected to stimulate creativity of thought and research. Criteria for selection include creativity, clarity and precision of writing, strength of argument, novelty of subject, and quality of research. The entries will be judged anonymously by an impartial committee comprised of members of The Forum's substantive publications

committee. The judges' selections will be counted by The Forum Law Student Writing Competition Chair, who will notify the winner by email of the judge's selection in August 2026. If a potential winner does not respond within ten (10) business days after ABA's first attempt to contact them, or if the contact is returned as non-deliverable, the potential winner forfeits all rights to be named as winner or receive a prize, and an alternate winner may be chosen.

4. PRIZES: The winner will receive:

- A cash prize of \$1,000
- Travel expenses not to exceed \$2,000 (to include: roundtrip economy-class airfare not to exceed \$650, ground transportation to/from airport and hotel, hotel lodging for 3 nights within the designated ABA room block, and member registration (in-person or virtually) to attend the 2026 Fall Meeting)
- A first prize plaque at the meeting
- A one-year membership in The Forum
- Recognition in The Forum newsletter, Under Construction, the Forum Flash, and on The Forum's website.

One or more authors may be determined a finalist and recognized with a plaque and recognition. Winners must submit a completed IRS Form W-9 to receive their cash prize. The full fair market value of the prize will be reported on an IRS Form 1099. Winners are responsible for all taxes in connection with receiving a prize. In the event that the 2026 Fall Meeting is held virtually, no travel expenses will be awarded, but the winner may still receive a complimentary member registration.

5. ODDS OF WINNING: Chances of winning will vary depending on the number and quality of entries.

However, The Forum reserves the right not to award any prize if the judges determine that no entries are of sufficient quality to merit selection that year.

6. ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS: The Forum will provide written communication to the winner and will announce via The Forum website as well as in the publication, the Forum Flash.

7. LICENSE/GRANT OF RIGHTS: By entering, the winners grant to the ABA the following rights: (1) the exclusive worldwide right of first publication of their entry in any and all ABA media or form of communication; (2) the nonexclusive worldwide right, in ABA's sole discretion, to use, transcribe, publish, reproduce, distribute, sell (as part of an ABA publication) or display the entry, alone or in conjunction with other materials; (3) the right to edit the essay to conform to the publication's standards of style, technological requirements, language, grammar and punctuation, provided the meaning of the essay is not materially altered; and (4) the non-exclusive worldwide right to use the winner's name and likeness in connection with the essay or this Writing Competition without further compensation. Additionally, the winning entrant must execute a separate licensing agreement giving the ABA the publication rights enumerated above and the right to use the article for any other purpose related to the ABA mission. If the winner fails to sign the agreement within ten (10) business days of receipt, the prize will be considered forfeited and another winner named.

8. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: Entries must be submitted by e-mail on or before June 30, 2026 by 11:59 p.m. (central).

9. LAWS AND REGULATIONS: This contest is governed by U.S. law and all relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations apply. By entering, all participants agree that the competition shall be governed by the laws of the State of Illinois, that the courts of Illinois shall have exclusive jurisdiction, and that Cook County, Illinois shall be the venue for any dispute or litigation relating to or arising from the competition. Void where prohibited by law.

10. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION: By participating, each entrant agrees to these Official Rules and the decisions of the Sponsor, and releases and discharges the ABA, subsidiary and affiliated entities, and each of their respective officers, directors, members, employees, independent contractors, agents, representatives, successors and assigns (collectively "Sponsor") from any and all liability whatsoever in connection with this promotion, including without limitation legal claims, costs, injuries, losses or damages, demands or actions of any kind (including without limitation personal injuries, death, damage to, loss or destruction of property, rights of publicity or privacy, defamation, or portrayal in a false light) (collectively "Claims"). Except where prohibited, acceptance of a prize constitutes a release by any winner

of the Sponsor of any and all Claims in connection with the administration of this promotion and the use, misuse or possession of any prize. All entries become the property of Sponsor and will not be acknowledged or returned. Sponsor is not responsible for errors or for lost, late, or misdirected mail or email, or telecommunication or hardware or software failures, including by reason of any bug or computer virus or other failure. Sponsor may cancel, modify or terminate the promotion if it is not capable of completion as planned, including by reason of infection by computer virus, tampering, unauthorized intervention, force majeure or technical difficulties of any kind.

- 11. USE OF AI:** The ABA prohibits the use of all generative artificial intelligence, including large language models, to create any portion of a contestant's written submission for this competition whether in the writing or editing phase. Use of Generative AI in the research phase is acceptable. Generative AI in this context includes, but is not limited to, OpenAI's "GPT" series, BLOOM, Jasper, BERT, Galactica, and Lex. Note that for these purposes, AI does not include basic tools for checking grammar, spelling, references, etc. By entering a submission in the contest, contestants are affirming that they did not utilize AI in the writing and editing phases of creating their written work product. The ABA reserves the right to screen submissions for use of AI through an AI detector. Contestants utilizing AI to write or edit their written work product will be disqualified. If it is determined after the winner is announced and the prize is awarded that the winning contestant utilized AI to write or edit their written submission in whole or in part, then the contestant will forfeit the winning designation and shall return the prize. A new winner will then be selected.
- 12. OPT-OUT OPTION:** Any individual may elect to opt out of receiving future contest mailings by calling the ABA Service Center at 800-285-2221.
- 13. PRIVACY POLICY/DATA COLLECTION:** Information provided by entrants in connection with this sweepstakes is subject to Sponsor's privacy policy, available at <http://www.americanbar.org/utility/privacy.htm>
- 14. SPONSOR:** American Bar Association, Forum on Construction Law, 321 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60654.