

NJSBA

Minorities in the Profession Section

Black History Month

Thursday, Feb. 26

6–8 p.m.

New Jersey Law Center

FREE ADMISSION

Open to the public

Featuring

- **keynote presentation**
- **musical performances**
- **award presentations**
- **essay contest**

ESSAY TOPIC

The Future of Equity
in New Jersey

Despite progress, disparities in housing, education, healthcare, and criminal justice still affect Black New Jerseyans. Choose one of these areas and:

1. Discuss its historical roots in New Jersey.
2. Analyze how these issues continue to affect Black communities today.
3. Propose a realistic policy or community-based initiative that could help create lasting change.

2026 MIPS Black History Month Essay & Trivia Contest

Official Contest Rules

ELIGIBILITY:

This contest is open to all New Jersey high school students (grades 9 - 12). There is no entry fee for this contest. All entries must be written in English and submitted online as a PDF file or Microsoft Word document. (See [Essay Format](#))

HOW TO ENTER:

Write a 1500-word essay answering based on the following essay topic and questions:
“The Future of Equity in New Jersey”

Despite progress, disparities in housing, education, healthcare, and criminal justice still affect

Black New Jerseyans. Choose one of these areas and:

1. Discuss its historical roots in New Jersey
2. Analyze how these issues continue to affect Black communities today.
3. Propose a realistic policy or community-based initiative that could help create lasting change.

Students must register and submit your essay online at [njsba.com](#) as a PDF or Word document (See [Essay Format](#)). Only one submission is allowed per student.

ESSAY SUBMISSION DEADLINE AND DETAILS:

All essays must be received by 11:59p.m. **February 5**

- The New Jersey State Bar Association reserves the right to publish all essay submissions, including placing the submission on the organization's website
- The student must complete the official online entry form
- Entries must be submitted by the student through the official Essay Contest Submission website. ([Use this link](#))
- Duplicate entries are not allowed.
- Each submission will be confirmed by e-mail using the address supplied.

IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES:

February 5 Essay submission deadline

February 19 Essay finalists will be notified

February 23 Selected students must confirm attendance for Award Reception

2026 MIPS Black History Month Celebration

Thurs., February 26

6 - 8 p.m.

This event will be presented by the NJSBA Minorities in the Profession Section at the New Jersey Law Center, featuring winners of our annual essay competition who will read and discuss selections from their essay. Additional program features include musical performances, a keynote speaker and an art show. [Click here](#) for more information or to register for this event.

ESSAY FORMAT

All Essays will be judged without knowledge of the identity of the author.

- The essay must be written in English.
- The title of the essay should appear at the top of page one; further pages should be numbered on the top right; the **student's name must not appear on the essay.**
- The essay must be in MLA format (double-spaced in a 12-point font, with one-inch margins on all sides of each page).
- The essay must be no more than 3 pages in length (or 1500 words), not including the Works Cited page.
- Essay must be saved as a Word Document or PDF file.
- Google Docs will not be accepted.*

***Google Docs should be saved as a Word or PDF document prior to submission. To do so, choose File/Download and select “PDF Document” or “Microsoft Word.”**

JUDGING CRITERIA:

Essays will be reviewed anonymously by a select panel of judges for the NJSBA Minorities in the Profession Section, based on the following criteria:

- Point of view (clearly stated and well-supported)
- Quality of writing (spelling, grammar, punctuation)
- Creativity and meaningful response (use of critical and creative thinking)
- Adherence to specific limitations (3 pages or 1500 words or less)

QUALIFYING ESSAY / WINNER NOTIFICATIONS:

Three essay finalists and two runners-up will be notified by email and/or phone on **February 19**.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH PROGRAM

Essay finalists and runners-up are invited to the New Jersey Law Center to read a selection from their essay of their choosing and briefly talk about how they came to their argument and what they will take forward from the experience.

STUDENT CONFIRMATION DEADLINE FOR TRIVIA CONTEST

All essay finalists must confirm their attendance and availability to read a selection of their essay and discuss by **February 23**

AWARD RECEPTION

All essay finalists are invited to attend the 2026 MIPS Black History Month Award Reception on **February 26** at 6 p.m. An invitation will be sent to the email address provided with the student's essay submission.

PRIZES:

A total of \$1500 in cash prizes will be awarded to five students as follows:

Essay Contest Awards

1st Place \$500

2nd Place \$400

3rd Place \$300

Honorable Mentions (Unranked Essay Winners/Runners-up)

1st and 2nd runners-up will be awarded \$150 as honorable mentions.