Purpose and Guidelines

Purpose

- To promote church-wide awareness of significant public policy issues by highlighting Anabaptist youth perspectives
- To promote youth understanding of the relationship of faith to public policy
- To promote greater awareness of the work of MCC's Washington Office and expand the base of Anabaptist policy advocates

Guidelines

- Prizes will be awarded as follows: Grand prize $1,000; three (3) honorable mention prizes of $500 each.
- The winner will also be provided the opportunity to visit her/his local congressional office, accompanied by an MCC staff person.
- Contest is open to Mennonite, Brethren in Christ and other Anabaptist youth of high school age and to all youth who attend Mennonite high schools within the United States and Puerto Rico.
- Immediate family members of current MCC staff or board members are not eligible for the contest.
- Essays should be 4-6 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-in. margins.
- Each student may submit only one essay. Essays should be submitted electronically, as an attachment to an email. The student’s name and any other identifying information should appear only on the first page of the document, which shall be a cover sheet that includes the essay title, student’s name, mailing address, email address, home congregation, school name, and current grade level.
- Essays will be judged anonymously.
- Essays must be e-mailed or postmarked by January 27, 2017, and submitted to your regional MCC office (see map below).
- Entries will be judged on content (demonstrated understanding of the issues), clarity (writing style) and creativity (imaginative and thoughtful policy positions).
- Excerpts from the winning essays will be published online.
Entries must be e-mailed or postmarked by January 27, 2017, and submitted to your regional MCC office:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MCC Central States</th>
<th>MCC East Coast</th>
<th>MCC Great Lakes</th>
<th>West Coast MCC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>121 East 30th Street</td>
<td>900 E. Howell St.</td>
<td>1013 Division Street</td>
<td>1010 G Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.O. Box 235</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA 19149</td>
<td>Goshen, IN 46528</td>
<td>Reedley, CA 93654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Newton, KS 67117</td>
<td><a href="mailto:eastcoast@mcc.org">eastcoast@mcc.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:GreatLakesOffice@mcc.org">GreatLakesOffice@mcc.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:westcoast@mcc.org">westcoast@mcc.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:kkw@mcc.org">kkw@mcc.org</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Topics (students should select ONE of the following):

**Gun violence**

While mass shootings in places such as Orlando, Fla., Hesston, Kan., and Kalamazoo, Mich., capture national media attention, countless other deaths due to gun violence go unnoticed. Meanwhile, members of Congress cannot agree on a strategy to address the problem.

What, if anything, should the federal government do to reduce the number of gun deaths in the United States?

- **Understanding of the issue (40 points total)**
  - How does the U.S. compare with other wealthy countries in terms of gun violence? (10 points)
  - What types of violence result primarily from firearms? (10 points)
  - How accessible are guns in to people living in the U.S.? (10 points)
  - What effect have laws on gun ownership and sales had on gun violence? (10 points)

- **Problem solving (40 points total)**
  - What actions should the federal government take to reduce gun violence? What limits are there to the success of these actions? (10 points)
  - What roles do state and local governments have in reducing gun violence, particularly in partnership, or in contrast to, the federal government? (10 points)
  - What are some practical solutions to reducing gun violence (specific ideas that could potentially be put into legislation)? (10 points)
  - Can owning a firearm for the purpose of self-defense be compatible with Christian beliefs? Why or why not? (10 points)

- **Writing style (20 points)** – Essays will be granted up to 20 points for writing style, grammar, spelling and citation.
**Colombia**

Although there is hope for a peace agreement in Colombia’s ongoing armed conflict, the war is deeply rooted in an unequal economic system that is not likely to change overnight. As different armed groups fight to control territory and drug trafficking routes, civilians are often caught in the middle of the violence. Over the years the United States has supported Colombia with large amounts of foreign aid, primarily supporting the Colombian military to eradicate illegal drug production and to eliminate illegal armed groups.

How has the “war on drugs,” mostly funded by the United States, impacted rural Colombian farmers and what are helpful ways to reduce coca growth and cocaine production?

- **Understanding the Issue (40 points total)**
  - How has the U.S. helped the Colombian government to fight the war on drugs in the past 15-20 years? (15 points)
  - Why do farmers choose to grow coca over other crops, and continue growing coca if the government wants them to stop? (10 points)
  - What has been the effect of aerial fumigations on coca growers? On farmers that grow other crops? (10 points)
  - Why were aerial fumigations ended in 2015? (5 points)

- **Problem solving (40 points total)**
  - Describe alternatives to aerial fumigations for reducing coca production. (10 points)
  - What actions could the Colombian government take to encourage farmers to grow alternative crops? (5 points)
  - What actions could be taken by the U.S. government to impact the U.S. side of the drug trade? (10 points)
  - How should our Anabaptist values influence our response to the policies of the U.S. government that negatively impact small Colombian farmers and their livelihoods? (15 points)

- **Writing style (20 points)** – Essays will be granted up to 20 points for writing style, grammar, spelling and citation.

**Immigration**

Immigration continues to be a polarizing issue in the United States. While the U.S. Congress repeatedly delays action on reforming our nation’s immigration system, the rhetoric from politicians and pundits has become increasingly hostile and sometimes hateful. If we could for a moment ignore the politics and the rhetoric on both sides, what would we find at the heart of the immigration debate?

Why do people migrate to the U.S.? How are current U.S. immigration laws flawed and in what ways could they be improved?

- **Understanding of the issue (40 points total)**
  - Interview a recent immigrant in your community (this could be a family member who is a recent immigrant). Why did he/she choose to come to the U.S.? What factors in his/her home country influenced this decision? What factors might have drawn him/her to the U.S.? (20 points)
How does this immigrant’s story compare with national data on why people migrate? (5 points)
How does this story match up with stories of migration in the Bible? (10 points)
How does this immigrant’s story compare with the stories of your ancestors or yourself? (5 points)

Problem solving (40 points total)
How should our Christian and Anabaptist values influence our response to immigrants in our communities? (10 points)
In what ways does current U.S. immigration law hinder those who want to migrate to the U.S.? (10 points)
What federal government policy changes should be made in order to improve our nation’s immigration system? (10 points)
What federal government policy changes should be made in order to address the root causes of migration from other countries to the U.S.? (10 points)

Writing style (20 points) – Essays will be granted up to 20 points for writing style, grammar, spelling and citation.