

First Freedom Student Competition **(National Essay Contest)**

The Council for America's First Freedom announces the 16th annual **First Freedom Student Competition**. This **national essay contest** offers **9th - 12th grade students** an opportunity to compete for a **\$3,000, \$1,500 and \$750 award**, as they examine the First Amendment and the history and relevance of religious freedom in America and the world today. This year's topic introduces students to George Washington's famous statement about "mere" toleration in his 1790 letter to the Jewish congregation of Newport, Rhode Island. Students will identify the basic principles of religious liberty espoused in this primary document and will further research and assess how well the United States has lived up to Washington's ideal. In addition to the monetary award, the first-place winner and his or her teacher (or other adult chaperone) will receive an all-expense-paid trip to Newport, Rhode Island in mid-August 2009 for the annual VIP reading of President Washington's historic letter. **Online registration** by participating students is required by **November 24, 2008**, and the **postmark entry deadline is November 29**. For more details on the competition and for a classroom poster and student flyer, visit www.firstfreedom.org, and then click on the red button under Council News.