



Margaret Chase Smith Essay Contest



“We don’t want a Government that dictates to, or controls by intimidation or unfair regulation, the TV industry or any of the media. But we don’t want the TV industry, in its massive power to dictate to the Government or control public officials through intimidation or fear of that power, to destroy them.”

**--Margaret Chase Smith
Washington & Lee University
Lexington, Virginia
April 23, 1973**



The ideal of a free press is so central to a democratic society that its protection is enshrined in the 1st amendment to the United States Constitution. Nevertheless, its practice is often contested, particularly during times of war or social upheaval. One of Margaret Chase’s early jobs was working for a local newspaper. As a US Senator, she experienced the manipulation of the media during the McCarthy era of the 1950s. Her 1973 speech referred to fears that the mass media had not only reported on but also fanned the flames of widespread social unrest during the 1960s and early 70s, eventually toppling a President of the United States. In light of this historical background, the Margaret Chase Smith Library invites Maine high school seniors to write an essay on what they think the proper role of the media should be in our own times of withering traditional newspapers, pervasive social media outlets, and rampant fears of “fake” news.

The rules of the contest are minimal. It is open to Maine high school seniors. Essays must be typed and double-spaced. Contestants should provide complete contact information so they can receive notification of final results. For publication purposes, essays should be no longer than 2000 words. As always, quality of evidence, argumentation, and writing is more important than quantity of pages. The best essays support personal opinions with historical context and cited facts.

The Library will award **\$1000** for first place, **\$500** for second place, **\$250** for third place, and five **\$50** honorable mention prizes. Essays are due by **March 30, 2018**. Prizes will be announced on May 4th.

To submit entries or for more information, please contact:

John Taylor
Margaret Chase Smith Library
56 Norridgewock Avenue
Skowhegan, ME 04976
(207) 474-7133
e-mail: jtaylor@mcslibrary.org
web: www.mcslibrary.org/awards/