

The Charlie Kirk FREEDOM Scholarship

A Forum for Free Inquiry and Expression

Join the Essay Contest

\$1,500 Prize

Submissions Open Until Midnight March 23, 2026

Sponsored by The Routt County Republicans

Application Packet Includes

- This Cover Page
- Scholarship Information (1 page)
- Application and Terms Agreement (2 pages)
- Essay Contest Guidelines and Writing Prompts (3 pages)

The Charlie Kirk FREEDOM Scholarship

Scholarship Information

Scholarship Award

\$1,500.00 will be awarded to one student whose essay is selected as the first place winner of the essay contest. (Writing guidelines and prompts included in the following pages.)

If the awarded applicant becomes ineligible after being selected, the scholarship will pass to the First Runner Up. (See Eligibility Requirements and Criteria for Use of Funds below)

The funds will be disbursed directly to the student's chosen school upon receipt of the institution's billing statement(s) and/or statements showing required materials and cost.

Important Dates

Submissions open January 12, 2026

Submissions close March 23, 2026 at midnight, mountain time

Judges' decision by April 30, 2026

Eligibility Requirements

The applicant must be a high school student graduating within the 2025-2026 academic year from a traditional high school or home school program, or be a person aged 19 or under with a passing GED Test score by May 26, 2026. (The winning applicant will be required to submit verification of their diploma or GED passing test score by May 26, 2026.)

The applicant must be enrolled in or pending approval for admission to a higher education program for the 2026-2027 academic year. (See more under Criteria for Use of Funds.)

Applicant must be a resident of Routt County, Colorado. (Proof of residency will be required from the winner.)

Applicant must be a citizen of the United States of America. (Proof of citizenship will be required from the winner.)

Criteria for Use of Funds

The funds must be used for accredited institutions of higher learning, including College, Trade School, Vocational School, or School of the Arts.

The funds may be used for tuition and/or learning materials required by the school for classes.

The funds must be used for the 2026-2027 academic year.

The Charlie Kirk FREEDOM Scholarship
Application and Terms Agreement Form

Participant name (first and last): _____

Address (physical): _____

How long have you lived at this address? _____

County of Physical Address: _____

Mailing address if different than physical address: _____

Applicant CELL phone number: _____

Phone Number if other than a cell phone: _____

Email address: _____

Are you 18 years or older? _____

If you are under 18 years of age, your parent or legal guardian will need to sign your application.

Select the type of program you are graduating from:

Traditional High School.

Which School, if applicable? _____

Home School

GED Testing

(Continue to signature page of Application and Terms Agreement Form)

What to submit:

1. This completed, signed Application and Terms Agreement form (2 pages)
2. Your completed essay with required header or footer information (see Essay Writing Guidelines)

How to Submit:

You will be emailing us your completed Application and Terms Agreement form and your essay in one email.

First you will need to autofill OR print and manually complete this 2 page Application and Terms Agreement form. Upload the completed and signed form as a pdf file and attach it in your email.

Next, attach your completed essay, also as a pdf file.

Lastly, Email the signed Application and Terms Agreement Form and your essay to:

FreedomScholarshipContest@gmail.com

Submissions open January 12, 2026

Submissions close March 23, 2026 at midnight, mountain time

Judges' decision by April 30, 2026

If you have any questions, please email us at: FreedomScholarshipContest@gmail.com

TERMS AND AUTHORIZING SIGNATURE

I verify that the information in this application is truthful and valid and that the essay I am submitting is my original work and does not infringe upon the copyrights, trademarks, rights of privacy, or other intellectual property, or other rights of any person or entity, and that publication of the essay via various media, including but not limited to Web posting, will not infringe on any third party rights.

By making this application I acknowledge that the sponsoring entity, and/or its members individually, are released from any and all claims, demands, damages, debts, costs, fees, obligations, losses, expenses related to the Charlie Kirk Freedom Scholarship.

Should I be the winner or a runner-up of this contest, I give my permission for the sponsoring organization (The Routt County Republicans) and its individual representatives to publish my name and any part(s) of my essay or my complete essay via various media, including but not limited to Web posting and newspaper articles.

Student Signature

Parent or Guardian Printed Name if student under the age of 18

Parent or Guardian Signature if student under the age of 18

(End of Application and Terms Agreement Form. Continue to Contest Guidelines and Writing Prompts)

The Charlie Kirk FREEDOM Scholarship

Essay Contest

Guidelines and Writing Prompts

Orientation

Writers, welcome to the Charlie Kirk FREEDOM Scholarship. This Scholarship was formed by the Routt County Republicans to honor Charlie Kirk's life and work and to continue his practice of providing young people with a public forum for free inquiry and expression. The following information will be your guide to more fully understanding the mission of the program and the writing guidelines for the essay contest.

What do you know about Charlie Kirk?

Many of you know a lot and have been following Charlie via his podcast and video posts of his college campus discussions. If you don't know much of anything about Charlie, we highly recommend that you research his life and work before you try to write your essay. In doing so, you will come to understand that Charlie Kirk was an important figure in the culture and politics of our time and had become an icon for college students and high school students.

Charlie was assassinated on September 10, 2025, at the age of 31. He had two small children, a three-year-old and a one-year-old, and a wife, Erika. Their loss and grief is surely profound, and maybe only those who have lost family members to violent crimes can understand, entirely. But we know enough, and people all over the world felt the tragedy and turned out to pay their respect, to express their sadness, and to protest Charlie's murder whether they always agreed with him or not. After all, Charlie's discussions covered a lot of territory.

In high school, Charlie had been very popular. He was a competitive athlete—the quarterback on the football team and the captain of the basketball team. Believing his college experience to be lacking academic challenge, Charlie dropped out of college, became self-educated and eventually a major conservative public figure who devoted his life and work to aid, teach, and inspire America's youth.

Much of Charlie's work centered on making college campuses safe and intellectually free. In establishing Turning Point USA, he empowered students to organize themselves, to self-lead, and to assert their Constitutional and academic rights. Charlie was well-known for his open forum discussions on college campuses, which highlighted the moral questions, personal values, social concerns, and political views that young people wished to discuss and debate. Students of many affiliations, backgrounds, and proclivities attended these discussions. Despite differences of opinion, Charlie drew an audience whose members weren't present to fight and disrupt but were there to talk—often loudly and passionately—about issues that formed the big and complicated questions of their lives. Charlie's audience grew to be world-wide.

Public discourse and debate, such as what Charlie Kirk brought to his campus discussions, is a tradition which has always characterized American freedom. In fact, if you have studied the history of civilizations, you likely know that public discourse is considered a pillar of all civil societies.

The Charlie Kirk FREEDOM Scholarship continues Charlie Kirk's intentions: To help young people be free and inquisitive thinkers; to offer a venue for our youth to respectfully participate in public discourse; and to encourage young people to be informed and principled as they exercise their rights as American citizens.

Introduction to the Writing

To write a high quality essay for this contest, you won't need to be conservative-leaning or leaning in any particular direction at all. This is a place for you to explore what you think about the topics under discussion in our public sphere. You might not have a particular view until the writing process helps you form one. By examining what is below the surface of general facts and engaging with the deeper layers of content and meaning that reside in your topic, you will likely come away with better writing.

The writing prompts provided below are formed from themes highly representative of Charlie Kirk. Consider watching videos of Charlie's campus talks, his podcast shows, his interviews that appeared on Fox News, and articles and stories which were told about him after his assassination. Be forewarned that many news personalities and some politicians routinely portrayed Charlie as a "controversial" figure. Others portrayed him as someone far worse. You will need to do your own research to decide what you believe about all of that.

The writing guidelines and prompts are intended as a place to begin thinking about your topic. You do not need to address the points in the prompt like questions that have to be answered and included in your writing, but thinking about those points might help you figure out what you wish to write about. However, if you are particularly inspired by the concepts and questions in the prompts, you may also choose to use any of those as your beginning. All of that is up to you.

The length of your essay will be largely dependent on how much room you need to fully develop your topic. Don't ramble merely to fill up space. Don't be so concise that you don't say anything very interesting or have too little to back up or explain your point. **Follow the essay writing guidelines below.**

Essay Writing Guidelines (ALL essay submissions must follow these guidelines)

Must be 1,250-2,000 words.

Include your name (first and last), the total essay word count, and page numbers in your essay header or footer.

Must be the original work of the student and entirely created by the student submitting the writing, without the use of AI or assistance from others. This means that the structure, organization, and invention of your content, and the writing of your sentences and paragraphs all must be your own. The ordinary and minimal use of book form or electronic writing tools such as a thesaurus, a dictionary, a punctuation and grammar guide or a spelling and grammar check that is part of software like Microsoft Word and Apple Pages is allowed.

The writing must be respectful in tone and language. When stating your opinions and arguing your points, simply maintain the proper decorum in your presentation.

Consider your audience. The people judging this contest know a lot about Charlie Kirk and the topics that he spoke about and debated from his platform. This audience does not want you to write a report of facts about Charlie, but is very interested in what you think about the topics Charlie discussed or represented by example.

Remember that the topics provided below are themes that are representative of Charlie. As such, your writing may reflect on Charlie's life and work as it relates to each topic, OR you may write on the topic without using Charlie as your example or as a framework to your essay. You may also draw on other resources, such as your own personal experience or concepts that you have read or learned about. Cite your sources when necessary. Basically the judges are looking for thoughtful writing on the subjects below but desire that you have the freedom to write on the subject matter in the way you choose.

Writing Prompts

Select ONE from the following 4 topics. Remember you may use the prompts to help you generate some thoughts, but you don't have to write specifically to any of the concepts within the prompts unless you want to.

Freedom

Do you know that the United States of America is the only country in the world whose founding documents place the power of government in the hands of the people? The only country. Think about the ramifications of that and the many rights inherent to American freedom which Charlie defended. To explore this topic a writer might ask: Where does freedom come from in the first place? How is freedom upheld? Are there any limitations placed on freedom? What happens when one person's freedom conflicts with another person's freedom? What key freedoms must exist if men and women are truly free?

Courage

Over the last decade, many new and enormous pressures have been placed on our society. Changes in technology, education, morality, medicine, population, and economy have been impacting young people quite dramatically, often negatively. Public safety has become a significant concern across the country. How does the world look to you? Do you feel safe or troubled as you consider stepping out into the world as an adult? What kinds of behaviors do you condone or want to be different in our society?

Consider too the enormous outcry from the people who gathered to protest Charlie's murder and to pay tribute to his life. To those, Charlie had been a courageous leader. Others disliked what he said and what he represented. Many threatened Charlie's life and attacked him on media platforms. No doubt, just speaking often takes tremendous courage. But courage comes in many forms. What is gained and lost through risk? What inspires people to go to certain lengths for certain causes? Where have you seen courage displayed and how did that impact you? Have you ever needed to rely on your own or someone else's courage? Who would we be as individuals without our own heroic acts? What would society look like without the large and small heroes and heroines who live now and lived before our time?

Manhood

This topic has generated a lot of controversy lately. But questions about the roles, rights, and identity of men and women have been in the conversation for centuries and documented all the way back to ancient writings. The questions, *Who am I?* *Why am I here?* seem to be necessary for every generation.

In today's quest, thousands of young people have looked to Charlie as a role model. You might or might not agree. But what are your beliefs about a man's roles and responsibilities to himself, to family, and to society at large? What are your views about masculinity—the very nature of male strength, power, and thought? What does it take to be worthy of leadership? What is involved in being a father, a husband, a provider and how does a man do that well or not? Think about what failure looks like. Think about the purpose of a man's life.

Ladies, this topic is for you too. How can we think about manhood without a woman's point of view? Consider the above, but maybe also consider the idea of gender roles—should they be different, are they different? Many generations have defined the interplay between men and women as "The Battle of The Sexes." In the 1990's they said that "Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus." Your generation came up with "Toxic Masculinity." What do you think, is toxic masculinity a real thing? What traits in men do you admire? What kind of man do you want to be with? Define manhood for us.

Open-Ended Student Choice of Topic

Select a topic of your own choosing that is relevant to Charlie Kirk's life and/or beliefs, and write something that is important to you.
