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Hillsdale College Holds 2026 Robert H. and Susan M. Rewoldt Essay Contest in Politics

Students wrote essays answering the question ‘Is America’s NATO membership serving the national interest? Why or why not?’

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College held its 2026 Robert H. and Susan M. Rewoldt Essay Contest in Politics this spring. This year’s topic was “Is America’s NATO membership serving the national interest? Why or why not?” Patrick McDonald ’26, Finnian Macaulay ’28, and William Winsor ’28 took first, second, and third place, respectively.

“Each of the students offered thoughtful arguments, unique insights, and well-informed analysis,” said Provost Christopher VanOrman. “We were grateful for their effort and pleased by the quality of their work.”

McDonald’s essay, “An Alliance Without an Enemy: The Case for U.S. Withdrawal from NATO” won first prize. McDonald argued that the fall of the Soviet Union rendered NATO obsolete.

“Ultimately, the question surrounding NATO is not whether America should retain its influence in Europe, but whether a nearly-80-year-old treaty that has outlived its original purpose is the right vehicle for doing so,” McDonald said. “It is not. American influence will be most effective when our allies are capable of defending themselves — and when the U.S. directs policy through a web of economic and military partnerships founded on mutual interest, not inherited obligation.”

Macaulay won second place for his essay, which argued that NATO has actually worsened international tensions and intensified conflicts, while compromising national security and sovereignty in both the U.S. and Europe.

Winsor's third-place essay, "NATO and the Deterioration of American Interests Abroad," argued that NATO's potential to pull the U.S. into an unwanted war weakens America's decision-making authority, potentially violates the Constitution, and disproportionately costs the U.S. while primarily benefitting Europe.

First place received \$5,000, second \$3,000, and third \$1,000. The contest, which is organized through the Politics Department and the Office of the Provost, is open to all Hillsdale College undergraduate students. This year there were eight submissions, and Stephen Goniprow, visiting assistant professor of politics, served as the faculty judge.

In 2019, Mrs. Susan M. Rewoldt established an endowment to fund an annual essay contest on political topics, made possible through a generous bequest to Hillsdale College from her late husband, Robert H. Rewoldt. Mr. Rewoldt's bequest has also funded the Robert H. and Susan M. Rewoldt Scholarship for the George Washington Fellowship Program and the Robert H. and Susan M. Rewoldt Endowed Merit Scholarship in Politics for students with a major in politics.

For headshots of the winners, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 7.5 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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