



June 29, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Salina South Middle School student wins Kansas State Finals of the National Civics Bee[®], advances to national championship in D.C.
Students from Overland Park take second and third place

Wichita, Kan. – Colin Burke, a student at Salina South Middle School, won the Kansas State Finals of the National Civics Bee on Saturday, June 27, earning the opportunity to represent Kansas at the National Civics Bee in Washington, D.C., this fall. Burke also received a \$1,000 prize for his presentation on expanding access to hygiene products in middle schools.

Burke described winning the Kansas State Finals as, “Shocking. I was really nervous before this, and it feels really good not to be nervous anymore. Now I want to implement my project at my new high school and study for the national championship.”

Emeline Wilinski, a student at Indian Hills Middle School in Overland Park, placed second and received a \$500 prize after her presentation on improving voter turnout. Caspian Karstens, a student at Olathe’s California Trail Middle School, placed third and received a \$250 prize following his presentation on policies to support the unhoused.

The three middle-school students were among the 15 participants from five competitions hosted by chambers in Hutchinson, Overland Park, Pittsburg, Salina and Wichita. This marked the third year the Kansas State Finals were held at the Kansas Leadership Center through a partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. This year’s event also recognized the nation’s 250th anniversary celebration.

The National Civics Bee encourages middle school students to deepen their understanding of civics while developing ideas to address challenges in their own communities. Students first demonstrated their civics knowledge through multiple rounds of increasingly difficult questions before five finalists presented solutions to real challenges facing their communities. They then answered questions from a panel of judges about how their ideas could create meaningful change.

“Every student who participated is a winner because every one of them showed what leadership looks like,” said Kaye Monk-Morgan, president and CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center. “Too often we talk about young people as the leaders of tomorrow. These students proved they’re already leading today. They identified real challenges, proposed thoughtful solutions and invited others to help make progress. That is what

leadership looks like today, and why KLC is proud to help cultivate civic leadership through the National Civics Bee.”

Hosting the Kansas State Finals reflects the Kansas Leadership Center’s mission of equipping people of all ages to tackle difficult challenges and strengthen their communities. The event was sponsored by Everygy.

Kansas Commissioner of Education [Dr. Jake Steel](#) delivered opening remarks, and [2025 Kansas State Champion](#) Tanya Ramesh from Wichita received the inaugural Beyond the Bee Award, recognizing her continuing commitment to her project she presented last year on access to healthcare in rural Kansas.

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[DOWNLOAD PHOTOS FROM EVENT](#) – Photo credit: Kansas Leadership Center

About the Kansas Leadership Center

The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) is a first-of-its-kind nonprofit educational organization with a civic mission, national reputation and global reach. Founded in 2007 to foster civic leadership for stronger, healthier and more prosperous communities in Kansas and beyond, KLC receives core funding from the Kansas Health Foundation (a private, philanthropic organization). It partners with nonprofit organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, businesses and communities to build cultures that are healthy, productive and well-positioned to make measurable progress on daunting challenges and emergent opportunities. KLC Press publishes leadership books and The Journal, a nationally recognized, award-winning civic issues magazine.

For more than 19 years, KLC has built a strong and respected institution in Kansas designed to deliver leadership development and culture change at unparalleled scale. Now, organizations across the country and around the world look to us to provide resources and consultation to support their own aspirations for mission-driven leadership education. Learn more at kansasleadershipcenter.org.

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