



# NEWS RELEASE

## Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

1021 North Grand Avenue East, P.O. Box 19276

Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276

Phone: 217/782-3397

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Contact: Kim Biggs

217-558-1536

Kim.Biggs@illinois.gov

## 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Students and Classrooms Invited to Compete in Illinois EPA Poster, Poetry, and Prose Contests

SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency is inviting fifth and sixth grade writers and artists from around Illinois to participate in this year's Poster, Poetry, and Prose Contest. The 2025 theme *How Can You Slash Your Trash?* invites students to think creatively about how to reduce the amount of waste they produce. This could include buying fewer single-use products, diverting food waste, repairing broken items instead of replacing or buying new, and recycling responsibly.

Educators are encouraged to introduce the Illinois EPA's curricula units on waste management and food waste (available for free at: <https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/education.html>). These units, which are aligned to Next Generation Science Standards, offer lesson plans and activities to help students understand the amount of waste thrown away individually and collectively, why that causes problems, and how waste reduction can positively impact the environment. Additional informational resources have been shared by the Illinois EPA on the contest website. After learning about waste reduction, students are invited to create posters or written works for the contest related to this year's theme. Teachers may display the submissions for voting and submit final entries to the Illinois EPA for further judging. Teachers may submit up to eight individual entries per school to the Illinois EPA by February 3, 2025.

The creation of posters and written works gives students an opportunity to express and share what they have learned. The students whose works are chosen for the exhibit will receive a certificate and ribbon. The top twelve entries will be given special recognition and displayed on the Illinois EPA website.

In addition to the individual student contest, this year's competition also includes a group video contest for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. Each class is invited to submit a 60-second video that highlights waste reduction strategies in accordance with the same theme, *How Can You Slash Your Trash?* Homeschool units, 4-H clubs, scout troops, and other extracurricular or after school groups with a minimum of five students are also eligible to participate in the video contest.

Additional information, rules, and required documents for both contests can be found at: <https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/education/contest.html>. Other questions can be directed to Kristi Morris at [Kristi.Morris@illinois.gov](mailto:Kristi.Morris@illinois.gov), or Eli Dollarhide at [eli.dollarhide@illinois.gov](mailto:eli.dollarhide@illinois.gov).

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