California Student Wins $10,000 Grand Prize in National Civic Engagement Contest

Hamid Torabzadeh from Long Beach, CA, earns top honors in the Bill of Rights Institute’s MyImpact Challenge for his disaster preparation program for teens.

[ARLINGTON, VA] — Hamid Torabzadeh, a recent graduate of Long Beach Polytechnic High School in Long Beach, CA, has big dreams of becoming a physician one day.

But he has already done plenty to protect the health and safety of his community.

Torabzadeh has just been named the $10,000 grand prize winner in the Bill of Rights Institute’s MyImpact Challenge for his work educating young people on disaster preparation, response, and recovery.

MyImpact Challenge is a program created by the Bill of Rights Institute that encourages students to solve community problems through civic engagement and constitutionally-principled service projects.

For this year’s contest, students from across the United States created projects to beautify communities, address food insecurity, provide school supplies to lower-income students, and much more.

Torabzadeh was deeply concerned that many vulnerable communities in Los Angeles County lacked access to disaster preparation education and resources. So, he partnered with the American Red Cross Los Angeles Region to found READYteens, a program that helps prepare young people to respond to disasters like hurricanes, fires, or medical emergencies.
“The experience has helped me better understand two of our critical natural rights ingrained in the Bill of Rights: Justice and Equality,” Torabzadeh wrote in his MyImpact Challenge application. “No community should be more susceptible to a disaster like a hurricane or a medical incident because of their ZIP code.”

David Bobb, president of the Bill of Rights Institute, said that projects like Torabzadeh’s show why it is important to help students develop civic engagement skills.

“A quality civics education should provide students with the citizenship skills they need to engage with their communities, solve problems, and participate in daily civic life,” he said. “We were excited to see so many student projects that advanced constitutional principles like equality and freedom, and that made lasting differences in communities across America.”

Runners-up for the Bill of Rights Institute’s MyImpact Challenge included:

- **Isabella Hanson**: Kennett High School, Kennett Square, PA. Founder of the “I Matter” student poetry and art competition promoting civil rights.

- **Camden Kiefer and Hailey Bishop**: Hinsdale South High School, Darien, IL. Developers of a program to create a farmer’s market as a civic gathering place in downtown Darien.

- **Miller Manguno**: Briarcrest Christian High School, Eads, TN. Founder of Operation: Orange Haven to provide meals and laundry supplies to the Orange Mound neighborhood in Memphis.

*The Bill of Rights Institute is an Arlington, VA-based nonprofit organization that teaches civics and history through market-leading curricula and educational experiences for teachers and students. To learn more about the Bill of Rights Institute, visit www.mybri.org.*

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