



MARTINET
GREATER NEW ORLEANS CHAPTER

Michael Harrison
President

August 20, 2026

**Erin Rigsby
Hawkins**
President-Elect

Dear Law Students,

Zachary Simmons
Treasurer

The Greater New Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society is now accepting submissions for the 2026 Law Student Scholarship. Please see below for details about this year's scholarship.

Jaina Green
*Vice President of
External
Communications*

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Greater New Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc. ("Martinet Society") Annual Scholarship Competition is designed to encourage students to express their views on a pre-selected topic. The contest gives law students an opportunity to obtain some financial support to continue their legal education. At least four scholarships will be awarded. Scholarships are funded by The New Orleans Martinet Legal Foundation, Inc., the 501(c)(3) non-profit branch of the Greater New Orleans Louis A. Martinet Legal Society, Inc.

Makala Graves
*Vice-President of
Internal
Communications*

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION?

Mollie Ponds
*Vice-President of
Membership*

This scholarship competition is open to law student members of the Black Law Student Association at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, Tulane University Law School, LSU Paul M. Hebert Law Center, and Southern University Law Center.

Victor Jones
*Immediate Past
President*

COMPETITION RULES AND DEADLINE

Malika Howard
Gala Co-Chair

Brooke Walker
Gala Co-Chairs

- All entries must be typewritten in 12-point font and double-spaced with margins no smaller than one (1) inch not to exceed 2,000 words, max of 5 pages.
- Each entry should have a cover sheet. The cover sheet must contain the name of each student, his/her local mailing address, e-mail address, telephone number, law school, law school classification (1L, 2L, 3L or 4L) for the 2026-2027 Academic Year, and length of time as a member of the Black Law Student Association (and any relevant leadership positions).
- Each submission must be accompanied by the applicant's resume.
- All submissions must be electronically submitted to the Gala Committee email: gnomartinetgala@gmail.com and must include Subject Line: 2026 Annual Scholarship Competition Submission by [your name].

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT ENTRY: AUGUST 30, 2026 5 PM (CST).

TOPIC FOR THE 2026 MARTINET ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

The Cornerstone Contested: Voting Rights and the Next Generation of Black Lawyers

The right to vote has been the cornerstone of the Black freedom struggle in America, and the legal battles surrounding that right have never ceased. Since the Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* gutted the preclearance provisions of the Voting Rights Act, states across the country have enacted a wave of legislation that critics argue disproportionately burdens Black voters - including strict voter ID laws, reductions in early voting, aggressive voter roll purges, and racially gerrymandered district maps. Efforts in Congress to pass new federal voting rights legislation have repeatedly stalled.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, dissenting in *Shelby County*, warned that striking down preclearance was "like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet." The years since have, for many, vindicated her concern.

On April 29, 2026, in *Louisiana v. Callais*, a 6-3 Supreme Court struck down Louisiana's second majority-Black congressional district - a district that had finally given Black Louisianians a fair opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice - as an unconstitutional racial gerrymander. In doing so, the Court drained much of the remaining force from Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, the provision that for four decades had served as the primary federal safeguard against the dilution of minority voting strength. Writing in dissent, Justice Elena Kagan accused the majority of completing its demolition of the Voting Rights Act, warning that plaintiffs alleging schemes to dilute minority representation would now find it nearly impossible to prevail in court.

Essay Prompt:

For Black Americans, the franchise is not merely a civic right - it is a hard-purchased inheritance, paid for with blood, sacrifice, and legal brilliance. As a future Black attorney, how do you understand the relationship between law and democracy in this moment? In the wake of *Callais* and the weakening of Section 2, what legal tools, advocacy strategies, or community-based approaches do you believe hold the greatest promise for protecting and expanding voting rights for Black communities? How do you envision your own career contributing to that effort?

Tips and Key Points to Address:

1. Overview *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) and its dismantling of preclearance. Discuss how that loss reshaped the landscape for Black voters in the decade that followed.
2. Summarize *Louisiana v. Callais* (2026) and its effect on Section 2. Explain the Court's rationale for striking down Louisiana's second majority-Black district and how it narrows protections against vote dilution.
3. Identify the measures critics say have burdened Black voters since *Shelby County*. Analyze what they reveal about the relationship between law and democracy today.
4. Evaluate the legal tools and strategies available after *Callais*. Weigh the promise and limits of each.

We look forward to reading the amazing essays you submit. Please reach out should you have any questions, cares, or concerns.

Sincerely,

Michael Harrison, II, Esq.
President