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Three Seventh-Grade Students Win Statewide Contest

Essay contest encourages civic engagement

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Three seventh-grade students recently wrote their way to the top three spots of the statewide “If I Were Elected Mayor” essay contest. Now, one of them gets to be mayor for a day.

The essay contest, sponsored by the Florida League of Cities and Florida League of Mayors, was open to all seventh-grade students in the state attending public or private schools, or who are homeschooled. Students were asked to write a 250-word essay describing how they would make a difference as mayor and how Home Rule, the ability for a city to address local problems through and by local decision makers with minimal state interference, helps make their city a great place to live. More than 1,000 essay submissions were received.

The contest winners are:

- **First Place:** Lauryn Edel, Valley Ridge Academy (St. Augustine)
- **Second Place:** Liam Bolai, Fletcher Middle School (Jacksonville Beach)
- **Third Place:** Emily Rager, Fletcher Middle School (Jacksonville Beach)

Lauryn’s winning essay described how she would focus on the citizens of St. Augustine and make sure their voices are heard and their needs met. In her essay, Lauryn writes that she “... would look at our city’s Home Rule and see if there is something we could improve to make local authority even stronger.”

The contest winners were recently recognized at City Commission/Council meetings in each of their home towns where they received gift cards and were presented with a joint resolution from the Florida League of Cities and Florida League of Mayors. First-place winner Lauryn Edel will also serve as “Mayor for a Day” alongside St. Augustine Mayor Nancy Shaver and the City Commission.

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Founded in 1922, the Florida League of Cities is the united voice for Florida’s municipal governments. Its goals are to promote local self-government and serve the needs of Florida’s cities. Florida’s cities are formed by their citizens and governed by their citizens. The League is founded on the belief that local self-government is the keystone of American democracy. For more information, visit www.floridaleagueofcities.com.

The Florida League of Mayors is an organization for mayors, founded and developed by mayors. Only mayors are eligible for membership. The organization provides the mayors of Florida with the ability to explore, in great depth, areas of mutual concern and opportunity. Governed by a 21-member Board of Directors and staffed by the Florida League of Cities, the Florida League of Mayors forges a powerful voice that serves Florida's cities well. For more information, visit www.floridamayors.org.