



MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release: March 3, 2026

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High School Students Compete for State Title at the 2026 Poetry Out Loud Oregon Finals *Recent Oregon Poet Laureate Anis Mojgani to give special performance at Historic Grand Theatre in Salem*

SALEM, Oregon — The Oregon Arts Commission is proud to present the 2026 Poetry Out Loud State Championships. High school students from across Oregon will gather at the Historic Grand Theatre on March 7 to compete in a dynamic display of memorization, performance and literary interpretation.

WHAT: 2026 Poetry Out Loud Oregon State Championships

WHEN: Saturday, March 7, 2026, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

WHERE: Historic Grand Theatre, 187 High St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

The students advancing to Oregon's 2026 State Contest are:

Alida Shi Lyons, Cleveland High School (Portland);
Ariana Morris, Redmond High School (Redmond);
Bena Rodecap, Grant High School (Portland);
Drishti Singh, Lakeridge High School (Lake Oswego);
Emma Keen, Oregon School for the Deaf (Salem);
Gabriel Hall, St. Stephen's Academy (Beaverton);
Josiah Gaither, St. Stephen's Academy (Beaverton);
Kaydence Pope, South Medford High School (Medford);
Molly Wheeler, South Medford High School (Medford);
Rain Obiesie, Lakeridge High School (Lake Oswego);
Samantha Faulkner, Trinity Academy (Portland).

VISUALS & MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

At the conclusion of the event (approx. 4 p.m.), media representatives are invited to:

- Conduct interviews with the newly crowned state champion.
- Take photos of the state champion with Oregon First Lady Aimee Kotek Wilson and Oregon Arts Commission Chair Jason Holland.
- A media release, images and video announcing the winner will also be made available before 8 p.m. on Saturday, March 7.

A partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Oregon Arts Commission and jurisdictional arts agencies, Poetry Out Loud is a national program that encourages the study of great poetry by offering free educational materials and dynamic recitation competitions. This program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence and learn about literary history and contemporary life. The Oregon state champion will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to compete in the National Finals for a chance to win the \$20,000 grand prize. The winner's school will also receive \$500 for poetry materials. The runner-up will receive \$100 and their school will receive \$200 for materials.

RSVP

Media members planning to attend or requesting post-event interviews are asked to confirm their attendance by contacting Heidi Hagemeyer, Arts & Culture Communications Coordinator, 971-518-0966, Heidi.Hagemeyer@biz.oregon.gov by March 6.

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The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, arts programs and funding for nonprofits and artists through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, establish policies and provide advisory support for public investment in the arts. The Arts Commission is part of Business Oregon in recognition of the vital role the arts play in supporting the economies, educational opportunities and vibrancy of communities throughout the state.

The Arts Commission is supported with funds appropriated by the Oregon Legislature, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts and the Oregon Cultural Trust. Learn more at oregonartscommission.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).