



IN THE
UNIFIED PALAU JUDICIARY
REPUBLIC OF PALAU

PRESS RELEASE # 26-170

September 24, 2026

(It is our duty at the Judiciary to inform the people what we do. This Press Release is one way to fulfill that responsibility.)

Re: The Palau Judiciary's First Annual Independence Day Essay Contest

Palau's Judiciary is excited to announce the winners of its first annual Independence Day essay contest. In September, the Judiciary invited students to submit essays on topics related to the holiday. Students in grades one through three were given the topic: How do people celebrate Independence Day? Students in grades four through six were given the topic: Why do we celebrate Independence Day? Students in grades seven through ten were given the topic: What values does Independence Day teach us?

The Judiciary is thrilled at receiving approximately 75 essays from students at several elementary schools in the Republic. The Court's selection committee was given the daunting task of determining the winning essays in each category from dozens of well-written entries.

The essays demonstrate that the youth of our nation understand the importance and meaning of Palau's independence. The students grasp the deep roots established by our customs and traditions. Additionally, they understand the joys, responsibilities, and unity of our communities coming together each year to celebrate this remarkable day in our history. Just as importantly, the students recognize that they can, and will, have an impact on the future of Palau.

The winning essay in each category will be published in the *Island Times* and *Tia Belau*, posted on the Judiciary's website with this press release, and receive a small monetary reward as a token of gratitude from the Judiciary for their participation in the essay contest.

Winner: Grades One through Three—**Obkal Sakurai**, Third Grade, Melekeok Elementary School

Winner: Grades Four through Six—**Jaella Shay F. Jasmere**, Sixth Grade, Peleliu Elementary School

Winner: Grades Seven through Ten—**Carla Bernardo**, Eighth Grade, Melekeok Elementary School

Honorable mention is given to the following essay writers:

Kialani Imetengel—Second Grade, Airai Elementary School.

Aubree Takawo—Fourth Grade, Melekeok Elementary School.

Saikemal Johnson—Fifth Grade, Melekeok Elementary School.

Chloe Ngiruchelbad—Seventh Grade, Airai Elementary School.

Name: Obiora K. Satorai

School: Melekeok Elementary School

Grade Level: 3 Grade

Date: 9/10/2020

How do people celebrate Independence Day?

The people celebrate independence day by coming together to perform cultural dances and music, showcasing and sharing of local made food and reminding everyone the importance of this day by showing and sharing of memories on this day.

Independence day is a celebration where all the people gather to celebrate the hardwork of the people who made the country become independent. Local dances and music performances from different groups of people such as the traditional dance where dancers wear the traditional attire, the matamalong where dancers sing to the local taught music, and the contemporary dance a more western influenced kind of dance that involves upbeat music. Addition to the performances which is the states shared. I love the turtle fritada and the coconut. Government officials speak to remind us that we celebrate independence because of the hardwork of the elder people and we are reminded that if it wasn't for them we don't celebrate this day. To close the celebration fireworks are being fired to honor this special day. October 10.

6th Grade

Jaela Snay
E Jasmere
September 22,
2020

Palau Independence Day Peleliu Elementary School

50 On October 1st 1994, Palau became an independent country. The people of Palau celebrate this important moment as a national holiday called Independence Day. It represents the day that Palau became its own nation. Palauans celebrate it with pride to honor the long journey it took to reach their freedom.

127 For hundreds of years, Palau was ruled by big countries like Spain, Germany, and Japan. After World War II ended in 1945, and Japan lost the war, the United Nations asked the United States to look after Palau, which made Palau a "trusted territory". This meant that Palau would be governed by the United States until its ready to rule on its own. In 1979, the people of Palau wrote their own national rules called the constitutions. Palau and the United States negotiated about a special partnership called the Compact of Free Association, known as COFA. This agreement meant that the United States would provide Palau with money and protection, while letting Palau be its own nation. When the agreement was agreed on, Palau gained its independence.

After Palau gained its independence, life on the island greatly improved. Palauans were finally in charge of writing their laws and choosing their leaders which allowed them to protect their culture and traditions. They used money from COFA to build roads, schools, etc.

A few years later after Palau became independent, it became a part from the United Nations. Being part of the U.N, allows Palau to have a voice on important global issues such as climate change and pollution. Palau also became famous for its strict laws on environmental conservation.

In conclusion, Palau spent decades fighting for sovereignty. They worked hard to gain their freedom and got it in 1994. Now, people celebrate October 1st to remember the effort it took to reach their freedom.

Name: Carla Bernardo
Grade: 8th

What values does Independence Day teach us?

Independence is much more than just a red-letter day on a calendar. Independence means freedom, being influential, and supporting others. Also it is the freedom to choose our own future, helping one another, and standing strong as a nation. But freedom doesn't mean we can do whatever we want without thinking; it means making good, and smart choices that help everyone.

Independence Day teaches us about love, kindness, working together, and freedom. Many years ago, Palau was guided by other nations. On October 1, 1994 Republic of Palau voted to become an independent country. By moving away from foreign control, Palau grew up to take full responsibility and care for its own citizens. Celebrating Independence Day each year is more than remembering a political event. It serves as an annual reminder who we are; Unity, protecting the environment, respecting our culture, and helping our community. It shows us that even though people are different, we are stronger when we help each other. It also reminds us that being a good friend and helping each other makes our community happy and safe.

Independence Day teaches us deep respect for our culture, tradition, unity, and hope. True unity means sticking together like a strong family, no matter how different we might be. When Independence Day arrives, people all across our island come together to sing, dance, play games, traditional craft, and eat traditional food. Waving our blue and yellow flag high honors for the leaders and ancestors that worked hard for our rights. These celebrations show that our real strength comes from teamwork, and helping each other out. By standing together, we make sure



Name: Carla Bernardo

Grade: 8th

Our community stays happy, strong, and safe.

Independence Day carries a deep respect for our culture and history. Palau's identity comes from the wisdom of our elders and the traditions passed down over time. Honoring our past helps We understand where we came from so we never forget our roots. Independence Day inspires young people to listen to stories from the past, show kindness, and build the honesty needed to become brave leaders in the future.

Independence Day reminds us of our duty to protect the environment. Palau is famous for its natural beauty, the green forest, colorful sea life, and clear water. Taking care of our land and water is our responsibility. This shows us that freedom came with responsibility to take care of our island home. When we pick up trash, protectv the coral reef, and live responsibly, we show real love for our country. Taking care of our ecosystem follows the traditional Palauan value of keeping nature healthy so future generations can enjoy it just as much as we do today. This important holiday teaches us brave actions, supporting our local communities. As we celebrate our freedom each year, Independence Day reminds us that when we act with courage, care for our people, protect our environment, and we keep the Republic Of Palau shining brighter for years to come.