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**NEW MEXICO STATE CHAMPION WILL TAKE PART IN THE FINALS OF
*POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST***

Santa Fe, NM – Nicole Bartlett, a senior at Oñate High School in Las Cruces, will represent New Mexico in the national finals of *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest* April 28-29 in Washington DC.

Bartlett, 17, beat out ten other finalists on Sunday, Feb. 27, in the 6th Annual New Mexico State Finals of *Poetry Out Loud*, sponsored by New Mexico Arts, the state arts agency and a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs.

Bartlett receives \$200 and an all-expense paid trip with chaperone to Washington DC to represent New Mexico at the national finals. Her school will receive a \$500 stipend to purchase poetry books for the school library.

New Mexico Arts Executive Director Loie Fecteau said Governor Susana Martinez had signed certificates acknowledging all 11 state finalists who took part in Sunday's *Poetry Out Loud* State Championship.

“The power of a program like *Poetry Out Loud* is that it helps our young people master public speaking and build self-confidence,” Governor Martinez told the students in a statement. “This is great training for the rest of your lives, no matter what career you choose.”

Santa Fe Mayor David Coss welcomed the 11 state finalists, their families and audience members to the state finals, which were held at St. Francis Auditorium of the New Mexico Museum of Art.

Other participants in the state finals included runner-up Triniti Pankuch, 16, a junior at Southwest Learning Centers, Albuquerque; Sean Michael Routt, 18, a senior at La Cueva High School, Albuquerque; Adrienne Valdez, 17, a senior at Public Academy for Performing Arts, Albuquerque; Dalton Carey, 17, a junior at Bernalillo High School, Bernalillo; Samantha Martinez, 18, a senior at Bloomfield High School, Bloomfield; Elyssa Moreno, 17, a junior at

Carlsbad High School, Carlsbad; Stephanie Garcia, 16, a sophomore at Clayton High School, Clayton; Kayla Hoosier, 18, a senior at Clovis High School, Clovis; Ethan Wertz, 15, a sophomore at Deming High School, Deming; and Zachary Lowery, 15, a sophomore at Las Montañas Charter High School, Las Cruces.

“We had more than 1,500 students and almost 50 teachers in New Mexico take part in *Poetry Out Loud* at the school level this year from across New Mexico,” Fecteau said. “All of our student competitors did a great job.”

Eleanor Steele, who manages the *Poetry Out Loud* program for the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington DC attended the New Mexico state finals on behalf of the NEA. Steele noted that reciting poetry is “a tradition as old as the Olympic games.”

Poetry Out Loud seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers by building on the resurgence of poetry as an oral art form, as seen in the slam poetry movement and the popularity of rap music. Through *Poetry Out Loud*, students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. The contest also seeks to address decreasing reading rates among young people, as cited in a recent NEA study *To Read or Not To Read: A Question of National Consequence*. Now in its sixth year of national competition, *Poetry Out Loud* has inspired hundreds of thousands of high school students to discover classic and contemporary poetry.

“*Poetry Out Loud* encourages students to begin a love affair with words, ideas, and imagination that will inspire them throughout their academic journeys and their careers,” said Rocco Landesman, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Poetry Out Loud encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization and performance and is the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Poetry Foundation. New Mexico students were among the more than 365,000 students nationwide who took part this year at the classroom level.

“The public recitation of great poetry,” said John Barr, President of the Poetry Foundation, “is a way to honor the speaker, the poem, and the audience all at once. *Poetry Out Loud* brings new energy to an ancient art by returning it to the classrooms of America.”

The *Poetry Out Loud* National Finals will take place in Washington DC at the Lincoln Theater on April 28 and 29 during the final days of National Poetry Month. On April 28, students grouped in three geographic regions will compete in semifinal competitions. Nine students (three from each region) will advance to compete in the National Finals on April 29. Judges will evaluate each student performance on criteria including physical presence, articulation, evidence of understanding, level of difficulty, and accuracy. Both events are free and open to the public.

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[*New Mexico Arts*](#), a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, is the state arts agency. *New Mexico Arts* administers the state’s One Percent for Public Art program, awards grants to nonprofit organizations for arts and cultural programs in their communities across the state, and provides technical assistance and educational opportunities for organizations, artists, and arts educators throughout New Mexico.

The [National Endowment for the Arts](#) is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts – both new and established – bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation’s largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities and military bases.

The [Poetry Foundation](#), publisher of Poetry magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audience.



Nicole Bartlett, 2011 New Mexico State Poetry Out Loud Champion (photo: Gina Marselle).

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