

# 2026 History Essay Contest

## School 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Winner

Forrest Hood “Fob” James, Jr.

By Forrest Baker  
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Forrest Hood “Fob” James Jr. was born on September 15, 1934 in Lanett, Alabama. His parents were James and Rebecca Ellington James. For his sophomore year of high school, he attended Baylor Military in Chattanooga, Tennessee where he played football. In 1952 he went to Alabama Polytechnic Institute, now known as Auburn University, for college. While at Auburn, James played football in the halfback position. Before his senior year of college, he got married to Bobbie May Mooney. James graduated in 1956 with a degree in civil engineering.

In 1956 James went to play professional football in the Canadian Football League for Montreal. He then went to serve as a lieutenant for two years in the United States Army Corps of Engineers. When James left the Corps of Engineers, he moved to Montgomery, Alabama with his wife and four sons. He was an earthmoving engineer. James needed to make more money to help his son who had cystic fibrosis, so he founded Diversified Products. There he invented a rubber coating for weights. In 1977, he sold this business to the Liggett Group of North Carolina.

In 1978 James wanted to run for governor of Alabama as a Democrat. Since multiple people tried to get the Democratic nomination, there was a runoff. He won the Democratic nomination. In the general election, James beat Guy Hunt and became the 48th governor of Alabama in 1979. In his first term, he

appointed the first black person, Oscar W. Adams, to the Alabama Supreme Court. He did not have much success in his first term and did not run for a second term when it ended in 1982.

After 12 years out of office, in 1994, James decided to run for governor again. This time he changed parties and ran as a Republican. There was a run off for the nomination and he won the Republican nomination. He defeated Jim Folsom, Jr. in the general election. In 1995 Governor James began his second term as governor of Alabama. In his second term, he was able to increase school funding for K-12 school education. He famously said he wished the government ran like Waffle House. He is retired and now lives in Florida. James is currently 91 years old. He is an important figure in Alabama. Governor James was both successful in politics and in business. I am interested in him because he did good for Alabama (and his name is Forrest).

## Bibliography:

Webb, Samuel L., and Margaret E. Armbruster, editors. *Alabama Governors: A Political History of the State*. 2nd ed., University of Alabama Press, 1990.