



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

*Virginia High School Mock Trial Program*

# Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition

## Competition Handbook

**Co-Sponsor**



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**VIRGINIA LAW RELATED EDUCATION INSTITUTE**

*Focusing on Access to Justice*

Adopted November 21, 2016

Re-adopted March 1, 2019



**Virginia Law Related Education Institute**

*Changing How Students Think*

*Focusing on Access to Justice*

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**With special thanks to Mary Beth Dalton for her dedication to the Virginia High School Mock Trial Program**

**Virginia High School Mock Trial Program**

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# Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition

## Competition Handbook

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## **Virginia Law Related Education Institute Executive Statement**

Welcome to the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition! Whether you are a coordinator, volunteer, coach, or team member, we value your commitment to mock trial and strive to make this program one of the best in the nation!

The mission of Virginia Law Related Education Institute is to develop and assist students as they explore fundamental concepts related to access to justice through unique and authentic learning opportunities. We attain this goal by providing analytically-based law-related curriculum and educational programs for secondary education students. We work in partnership with the Center for Legal and Court Technology at the College of William and Mary Law School, and we are affiliated with the National High School Mock Trial Championship.

The Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition is an integral part of law-related education in Virginia. Mock trial, which is a model of project-based learning, is a national educational competition that requires students not to win a case on its merits, but instead deliver the best solution to a mock trial problem. Teams from all over the United States and abroad compete yearly at a national championship.

The Virginia competition began in 2006. We incorporated the competition into our curriculum in 2016 to expand this opportunity to students throughout Virginia and Washington D.C.

Many of us are former mock trial team members and coaches, and we understand the commitment necessary to prepare for a competitive and rewarding competition. To honor your commitment, we provide competing students with a world class mock trial experience. But, we cannot do any of this without the support of competition volunteers, partners, and corporate and individual donors.

To our competitors, I wish you the best of luck as you present your solution to the mock trial problem. To our volunteers, sponsors, and donors, I hope that you see the value of analytically-based law-related education and continue to support this worthwhile activity.

Please contact me or my staff at VLRE if you have any questions about this manual.

With regards, I am

Very truly yours,

Matthew Rossetini, Executive Director  
Virginia Law Related Education Institute

## **The Purpose of Mock Trial in Virginia**

The Virginia High School Mock Trial Program provides students with an opportunity to participate in an educational law-related activity. While the Program is competitive, the goal of the Program is to provide students with law-related education that focuses on:

- Increasing understanding of the judicial process and access to justice
- Developing and refining speaking, listening, writing, and analytical skills
- Encouraging teamwork, cooperation, and respect for fellow teammates, and
- Furthering an understanding of law-related education

All participants in the Program, whether they be students, sponsors, coaches, or volunteers, are reminded that the primary goal of the activity is educational. VLRE adopts the National High School Mock Trial Championship Code of Conduct and reserves the right to disqualify or bar a participant from future competitions and event for any violation of that code of conduct.

## **Insurance and Securing Facilities**

VLRE will secure facilities for regional and state competitions. VLRE will secure personal and property liability insurance for all competition sites. VLRE is not responsible for the loss of personal property or money by a party attending a Virginia High School Mock Trial event.

## **State and Regional Competitions**

### The State Competition

The state competition is held between the first and third weekend in March. Up to twenty teams may advance from regional competitions to the state competition. The two-day competition will consist of four rounds and a final round for placement. All teams compete in the first four rounds of the competition. The top ten teams at the end of four rounds compete in the final round, with the top two teams competing against each other for the state championship, and the remaining eight teams competing for placement. The competition will be held at a facility such as a law school or college.

Teams that do not advance to the placement round receive certificates and awards for individual achievement after round four. At the end of the competition, all remaining teams except for the top three teams will be awarded certificates based on their final position in the tournament. The top four teams will then be announced in order, with the top three teams receiving a plaque. Individual student awards will be presented prior to the announcement of team placement.

### Regional Competitions and initial round of the State Competition

If more than twenty teams register for the competition prior to the final deadline for registration, VLRE will hold regional competitions prior to the state competition. Regional competitions will be run in the same manner as the state competition with the following exceptions:

- A regional coordinator will serve as the designee of the state coordinator.
- Competitions are held between the third week of January and the first week of February.
- There are three rounds held on one day for all teams and no championship round.
- Teams are ranked on all rounds using power rankings with an aggregate score tiebreaker.
- Competitions will be held on a weekend most likely to attract teams in that region, and
- The competition will be held in an appropriate facility such as a court house or high school.

VLRE will contact all registered teams by email regarding if regional competitions are needed and identify regional assignments or floater designations.

Regional team assignments are determined as follows:

- The number and location of regional sites will be based on the number of teams anticipated to participate in the program in that region and the general location of those teams
- Teams will be assigned to the closest regional site in relation to their specific location
- Certain teams that are generally located between two regional sites will be designated as floater teams, and as such, will be asked by VLRE for the latest possible date in which they can be assigned to a regional site based on the administrative needs of the team
- The assignment of a site is final and cannot be challenged.

The number of teams advancing to the state competition will be determined by the state coordinator. The state coordinator will set forth a ratio based on the number of sites and number of teams per site as is required to fill a twenty-team state competition. Sites in which more teams are competing in relation to other teams will be assigned more slots for advancement to the state competition.

The twenty teams selected for the state competition will be ranked by ballet and points earned at each regional competition. Based on that ranking, teams will be seeded to the first round as follows:

- Teams one to ten will be paired together, with team one competing against team ten, team two competing against team nine, and so forth until all teams are assigned
- Teams eleven to twenty will be paired together, with team eleven competing against team twenty, team twelve competing against team nineteen, and so forth until all teams are assigned

The ranking of teams will not be disclosed to any teams or scoring judges during the competition.

### **Focus Regions**

The Virginia High School Mock Trial Program delineates focus regions from competition regions. Focus regions allow for the effective allocation of volunteer resources and workshop opportunities. Focus regions do not correlate with regional competition sites, which are selected based on the number of teams within the state and the geographic locations of those teams.

## **Scrimmages**

Scrimmages provides students with an opportunity to practice skills in a real-time environment. Students become comfortable competing in a competition setting, as well as refine techniques. If twenty teams or less register for the state competition, VLRE will hold regional scrimmages using the same assignment system used for regional competitions. In all other instances, VLRE will determine the feasibility of offering teams opportunity to scrimmage two to three weeks prior to the regional competition.

## **Adoption of National Mock Trial Rules and Rules of Evidence**

The Virginia High School Mock Trial Championship adopts the National High School Mock Trial Championship Rules and Rules of Evidence. The National Mock Trial Rules sets forth the rules of the competition itself while the Rules of Evidence are modified Federal Rules of Evidence prepared by the National High School Mock Trial Championship. The *Mock Trial Handbook* controls over these rules.

## **Anti-Scouting Provision**

The Virginia High School Mock Trial Program welcomes the registration of multiple teams from the same school, as well as cooperation by teams from different schools and the homeschool community. Prior to the competition, teams may prepare, practice, and scrimmage each other, as well as discuss strategy and any other issues related to the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition.

Once a team enters a region or state competition site, that team may not share any information related to the actions, strategy, solution, or presentation by any opposing team to any other team. This includes information gleaned from any qualifying competition. The state coordinator or designee will determine the appropriate penalty for both the offering and offered team.

## **Amendments as Needed for the Competition**

The state coordinator may at his or her discretion amend both the rules of the competition and rules of evidence as required, per the needs of the competition. Amendments will be included in this handbook or provided to participating teams at least three weeks prior to a competition. Corrections to, or clarification of, the mock trial problem are not considered amendments to the rules.

## **The Mock Trial Problem**

### Drafting the Problem

Each year's mock trial problem is designed so that neither side of the case has an unfair advantage. The problem may be either civil or criminal in nature and covers any area of law. Criminal cases will be weighted in recognition that the prosecution carries a much heavier burden than the plaintiff in a civil case. All witnesses available to testify will be given gender neutral names so that they may be played by either male or female students. Teams are responsible for communicating the gender of the witnesses to each other prior to the start of the round.



Each side will be assigned three witnesses whom they must call to testify. All witnesses should have a mix of good and bad facts for their side of the case. Additionally, both teams should be given at least one expert witness. A witness's affidavit, deposition transcript, or expert report should indicate which exhibits included in the case packet that witness is familiar with, if any.

### Corrections and Clarifications Prior to Trial

The competition chair may make corrections or changes to the problem, as needed, prior to competition. No changes, however, may be made one month prior to the state competition. Changes will be issued via a new version of the problem and accompanied by a change log. The change log will identify what portions of the problem have been altered and on what pages these changes can be found. Both the new version of the problem and the change log will be made available to all teams at the same time. The newest version of the problem becomes effective once all teams have been notified of the updates. All teams must use the latest version of the case.

Any team may seek clarification of any part of the problem. Requests for clarification should be sent to [vamocktrial@govlre.com](mailto:vamocktrial@govlre.com) and titled "Request for Clarification." The competition chair will review the request and respond in one of four ways:

1. Send a return email to notify the team that the request is improper because the information sought is immaterial to the case, designed to be ambiguous, or already answered by some other portion of the case packet.
2. Send a message to all registered teams that includes the question asked and the committee's answer to the question.
3. Post on the VLRE mock trial website the request and resolution by VLRE.
4. If warranted, the chair may update the problem to resolve any issue in need of clarification.

## **The Competition Venue**

### Appropriate Facilities

Competitions are held at locations that can accommodate multiple trials occurring at once. Schools, courthouses, and other similar places are all acceptable locations for a competition. Trial rooms will be large enough to accommodate two teams, their sponsors/coaches, and the judging panel, but may or may not be large enough to accommodate significant spectators. Spectators may be asked to leave by competition staff if there is not enough room to accommodate everyone.

### The Courtroom

When rounds take place in rooms other than actual courtrooms, competition staff will arrange the room to simulate a court of law. There will be two counsel tables, one for the attorneys of each team. Witnesses for each team will sit in chairs behind their respective counsel tables. A separate table will be set up for the judging panel with the witness chair placed to one side. Students are permitted to treat the judging table as both the bench and the jury box. The space between counsel tables and the judging table will be the well of the courtroom.

When rounds take place in actual courtrooms, competitors will utilize the set up already in place. Competitors are not permitted to move or attempt to alter the courtroom in any way. Plaintiff or prosecution will sit at the counsel table closest to the jury box.

All judges will be given placards designating them as either scoring judges or the presiding judge. Teams will also be given a placard with their team identification code to be displayed on their counsel tables. Judges will be provided with a clipboard, pen, and water bottle for use during trial.

### Accommodations for Students

The Virginia High School Mock Trial Program encourages participation by all students in mock trial. VLRE will make efforts to secure facilities that comply with federal disability access laws and will further attempt to accommodate teams on which a disabled student is a member. VLRE will not provide for a disability aide or device such as a sign language interpreter, but the use of such an aide or device will be allowed during the competition.

Any team requesting an accommodation should contact VLRE no less than three weeks prior to the competition so that we can attempt to prepare for the accommodation. Accommodation requests after that date may not be honored by VLRE.

## **Team Registration and Team Roster**

### Team Registration

All teams wishing to register for the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition must do so before the deadline set by VLRE. No team may register within three weeks prior to a competition.

VLRE establishes the following fees and deadlines effective March 1, 2019:

Early Registration opens September 1 <sup>st</sup>	
Early Registration (by October 15 <sup>th</sup> )	\$200 registration \$25 trial packet and materials
Registration (by December 1 <sup>st</sup> )	\$250 registration \$25 trial packet and materials
Late Registration (Closes December 15 <sup>st</sup> )	\$300 registration \$25 trial packet and materials
Team withdrawal/refund deadline	December 15 <sup>th</sup>

Teams will use a registration form provided to them on the VLRE website. A copy of that form is included in the appendix of this handbook. Teams may register via the GoVLRE Portal on the VLRE website or by sending their registration through the mail. Fees are subject to change from year to year.

### Team Roster

Completed copies of a team roster must be duplicated by each team prior to the competition. Handwritten rosters will not be accepted. Roster must include the following information in the format set forth in the appendix of this handbook:

- Team identification letter (assigned at registration)
- Name of team coach
- The name and position of each attorney (opening, closing, cross, etc.), and
- The name and gender of each witness, including the team member's name

No information identifying the geographic location or name of the team's school or primary homeschool location may be included on the roster.

One copy of a team roster must be submitted upon registration at the regional and state competition. That copy will be designated the official team roster of the competition. Before each round, teams will exchange copies of their team roster. A copy of the team roster must also be made available to the judging panel and presiding judge before each round. Teams are not required to present their witnesses in order of appearance on the team roster, but they must indicate to the scoring judges only if such a change is to be made prior to each round.

### **Judges' Lounge**

Prior to every round, judges will report to the Judges' Lounge to check in and be briefed on the competition rules. The Judges' Lounge is off limits to all competitors and spectators and is restricted to judges and competition staff. Food and drinks will be provided for the judges.

Before rounds begin, a brief presentation will be given to judges covering mock trial specific rules and how to properly score a round. Judges will then be assigned to rooms and a presiding judge for each round will be designated by competition staff. Staff will then escort judges to the correct rooms.

### **Scoring, Rulings, and Instructions**

#### Use of Power Rankings and Aggregate Score

Virginia High School Mock Trial uses a modified power ranking or "Swiss Ranking" system like that used by the National High School Mock Trial Competition (for an explanation of that system see <http://www.nationalmocktrial.org/scoring/>). Power ranking in Virginia is used as follows:

- *Round Robin Rounds* – power rankings determine match-ups, with the highest-ranked winning team facing the lowest-ranked winning team in the next round and the highest-ranked defeated team facing the lowest-ranked defeated team, with rankings based on scores for that round. Except in instances when a bye is necessary, teams at the state competition will be scored on four rounds of competition, with a fifth round to determine the state champion and the top ten

rankings. Teams at regional competitions will be scored on three rounds of the competition and ranked accordingly.

- *Odd number of teams* - In the event of an odd number of teams, one team will be selected at the start of each round by random draw to serve a bye. The National High School Mock Trial Championship rules will apply in terms of scoring when a bye is necessary. Teams may only serve one bye. At a regional competition, the bye team from round one and round two will meet in an additional round, and three fully scored rounds at regional competitions will be used to determine placement.
- *State Competition Championship Round* – In the fifth round of the state competition only, the teams with the top two scores (best win-loss records and tiebreakers) will meet to determine the state champion. The teams with the next two highest scores will meet for the consolation round, and so on until all teams (10 max) are seeded for the final round. In the event of a tie based on win-loss record, the team with the higher aggregate score advances. During the final round, the team with the higher win-loss score (or aggregate score if a tie exists) selects whether they wish to prosecute or defend the case. The raw score in each championship round match determines the winner of the match and final placement in the competition. In the event of an odd number of teams, the lowest team in the competition will not participate.

### Rulings on Challenges

Coaches and team members may issue challenges for a violation of the rules of competition as follows:

- *Coaches* may only challenge actions by a coach or adult affiliated with another team. The challenger must advise the challenged coach of the action and collaborate to determine if the action substantively impacted the round. If the issue is unresolved, the state coordinator or designee will meet with the coaches, with the challenging coach citing the action and rule. If the state coordinator or designee determines that a violation occurred, he or she will inform the judges, who will determine if a scoring change is necessary. Failure of either coach to appear under this provision will result in an automatic ruling for the opposing coach.
- *Team members* may only challenge the actions of opposing team members. The competition uses a modified dispute resolution procedure based on National Mock Trial Championship rules, specifically Rule 6.1 to 6.3. The trial judge may request the assistance of the state coordinator or designee, but the outcome of the dispute and scoring changes by judges is not appealable.

### Scoring Ballot

The scoring ballot included in the appendix of this handbook is the official scoring ballot for the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition. The scoring ballot is adopted from the Nebraska High School Mock Trial Competition. The “prosecuting” school is the school representing the Commonwealth in a criminal trial or the plaintiff in a civil trial.

Included with the scoring ballot is a Scoring Rubric and factors to consider. Scoring judges are encouraged to review and use this material to provide as close to a uniform experience as possible to participating teams.

Scoring ballots will not be made accessible during the regional or state competition.

#### Alternate Judges

If all courtrooms are staffed with three scoring judges, alternate judges will be assigned randomly to courtrooms. The judge serving as the presiding judge in that courtroom will not score the round.

#### Constructive Critiques

Trial and scoring judges are highly encouraged to provide feedback to students once scoring ballots are collected. VLRE is committed to providing all participating students with a positive educational experience and asks that all judges keep this in mind when providing critiques. To that end, suggestions for constructive critiques of students will be provided to trial and scoring judges.

#### Instructions for Presiding Judges

Instructions will be provided to explain the role of the presiding judge during a round. These instructions cover the timing of the trial, evidentiary rulings, and competition violation disputes. Instructions are included in the appendix.

#### Instructions for Scoring Judges

Instructions for scoring judges explain the purpose of mock trial, use of the scoring sheet and rubric, challenge procedures, and post-trial critique. Instructions are included in the appendix.

#### Instructions for Coaches

Coaches are responsible for ensuring that their teams abide by the competition rules and cooperate with tournament staff. Coaches are welcome to watch all the rounds in which their students compete and discuss strategy and constructive critiques with their students between rounds. Coaches are not permitted, however, to coach or communicate with their students during a round. Coaches may communicate or otherwise interact with their team during a round only in the event of a medical or other emergency. Instructions for Coaches are included in the appendix of this handbook.

#### Closed Tabulation Room

The tabulation room is closed at all competitions except to the state coordinator, competition chair, and their respective designees. Scores will be provided post competition through electronic means.

### **Individual Awards**

During the first four rounds, scoring judges will rank the top four attorneys and top four witnesses for each round. Rankings receive the following points: rank one receives five points, rank two receives four points, rank three receives three points, and rank four receives two points. Individual awards are given to students who achieve the highest cumulative scores for a side of a case. In the event of a tie, the win-loss record of the student's team will determine the winner. In the event of a further tie, the total aggregate score of the team will be used. In the event of an odd number of teams, the lowest-scored rank for each team member will be dropped from those teams that did not serve a bye round. Six awards for best attorney and six awards for best witness will be presented at the conclusion after round four of the competition and the conclusion of the competition.

### **Pre-Competition Meeting and Timekeeper Meeting**

Before the beginning of the first round, team coaches will report to a single location for a meeting with the statewide coordinator or his or her designee. The coordinator or designee will welcome all teams and discuss any unique rules for the competition or related to the facility. Timekeepers from each team will also meet with the statewide coordinator or his or her designee to discuss timekeeping rules.

### **Introduction to Mock Trial as Project-Based Learning**

The Virginia High School Mock Trial Program provides a workshop introducing mock trial as project-based learning. This workshop is designed to help new coaches use mock trial as an authentic project-based learning experience. Workshop attendance is not mandatory to participate in the competition.

### **Post-Competition**

The winner of the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition advances to the National High School Mock Trial Championship. VLRE will be responsible for payment of the National High School Mock Trial Championship association fee. The advancing team is responsible for the team registration fee and all additional costs related to the competition. The advancing team must notify VLRE by email of their intent to participate in the national championship by 5:00 PM on the first Friday following the state competition. The winner of the state competition is recognized as the champion even if that team is unable to attend the national competition.

If the advancing team is unable to attend the national competition, VLRE will contact the first runner up in the state competition and provide them the opportunity to advance to the national competition. The first runner up will have forty-eight hours to confirm by email that it will attend the national competition. If the first runner up is unable to attend the national competition, VLRE will contact the second runner up in the state competition and award them advancement to the national competition. The second runner up will have forty-eight hours to confirm by email that it will attend the national competition. This cycle will continue until a team can attend the national competition, or the time to enter the national competition expires.

### **Use of Social Media, Photography and Videotaping**

Promoting VLRE activities and accomplishments allows our partners, donors, attendees, and the community an ability to see the incredible opportunities we provide to our attendees. As such, the following guidelines are adopted for the competition:

- The use of social media is encouraged during the competition subject to the following:
  - Both teams must both agree to the use of social media prior to each round and advise the judge of their decision.
  - Teams and spectators may not post specifics of the trial on social media during the competition (e.g., “Johnny makes his opening statement to the court!” is acceptable, but “The other team argued that our witness is lying. Sad!” is not acceptable).
  - Team members actively participating in each round may not have electronic devices of any kind on their possession except a stop watch for team timers.
- Spectators, the media, and VLRE representatives may take pictures and videos of any part of the competition (subject to VLRE opt-out allowances).
- If a team wishes to videotape any part of, or the entirety of a round, the opposing team must agree, and the requesting team must advise the judge of their decision.

Any violation of the above guidelines will be considered a violation of mock trial rules and are subject to the mock trial rule resolution procedure set forth in this handbook.

### **Revision Log**

The following revision were adopted by VLRE at the 2019 re-adoption of the handbook:

1. Multiple change made to align verbiage with the *Virginia High School Mock Trial Program Internal Guide*.
2. *Page 6, State and Regional Competition, Regional Competitions and initial round of the State Competition*, a new system for regional competition team selection and ranking for the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the state competition was adopted.
3. Addition of competition materials checklist
4. Addition of “welcome to the Gallery” parent and guest information sheet
5. Addition of press release
6. Addition of state competition winner letter

The following revision was implemented on March 9, 2019

1. *Page 12, Scoring, Rulings, and Instructions, Rulings on Challenges*, implemented a bifurcated system for challenges issues by coaches versus challenges issued by students.



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

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## Competition Materials Checklist

- |      |   |     |
|------|---|-----|
| I.   | Registration                                  |     |
|      | VLRE poster (if provided)                     | [ ] |
|      | Easel for poster (if needed)                  | [ ] |
|      | Table and tablecloth                          | [ ] |
|      | Team registration packets (one per team)      |     |
|      | <i>Competition schedule</i>                   | [ ] |
|      | <i>Facility Map</i>                           | [ ] |
|      | <i>One copy or the scoring rubric</i>         | [ ] |
|      | <i>Instructions for team sponsors/coaches</i> | [ ] |
|      | <i>Social Media Guide</i>                     | [ ] |
|      | Parent and guest guide                        | [ ] |
|      | Extra rosters                                 | [ ] |
| II.  | Courtrooms (for each courtroom)               |     |
|      | One bench brief (in three ring binder)        |     |
|      | <i>Instruction for Trial Judges</i>           | [ ] |
|      | <i>Bench Memo</i>                             | [ ] |
|      | <i>Copy of NHSMTTC rules of evidence</i>      | [ ] |
|      | <i>Dispute resolution sheet</i>               | [ ] |
|      | One tent placard "Presiding Judge"            | [ ] |
|      | Two tent placards "Scoring Judge"             | [ ] |
|      | One placard "Plaintiff" or "Prosecution"      | [ ] |
|      | One placard "Defense"                         | [ ] |
|      | Three writing pads (one per judge)            | [ ] |
|      | Writing utensils (at least one per judge)     | [ ] |
|      | Two sets timekeeper cards                     | [ ] |
|      | Demonstrative evidence (if provided)          | [ ] |
|      | Easel (if needed)                             | [ ] |
| III. | Tabulation Room                               |     |
|      | Basic calculator                              | [ ] |
|      | One set of notecards                          | [ ] |
|      | White boards (for round assignments)          | [ ] |



Paper pads [ ]

IV. Judge’s Lounge

Scoring packet (one per scoring judge)


*Scoring judge’s scoring sheet* [ ] (one per judge per round)

*Scoring rubric* [ ]

*Constructive critiques* [ ]

*Instructions for scoring judges* [ ]

Food, coffee, and beverages [ ]

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## Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition Registration Form

Name of Sponsoring School or Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Coach: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed a check for the following (made payable to “VLRE”),

Early Registration (October 15 <sup>th</sup> deadline)	\$225 registration	[ ]
	\$25 trial packet and materials	[ ]
Registration (December 1 <sup>st</sup> deadline)	\$250 registration	[ ]
	\$25 trial packet and materials	[ ]
Late Registration	\$300 registration	[ ]
	\$25 trial packet and materials	[ ]

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

The team withdrawal deadline is December 20<sup>th</sup>. No refunds will be processed after that date.

**Return this form and your payment to:**  
Matthew Rossettini, State Coordinator  
Virginia Law Related Education Institute

3329 Doncaster Court  
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23452

This registration form is available at [www.govlre.com](http://www.govlre.com).



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

**3329 Doncaster Court**

**Virginia Beach, Virginia 23452**

**757-581-4056**

[info@govlre.com](mailto:info@govlre.com)

[www.govlre.org](http://www.govlre.org)

Team:

Coach:

We are pleased to register you for the 20XX Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition! If you registered by mail, you should now have access to the materials at, [www.portal.govlre.org](http://www.portal.govlre.org).

Your regional site and team identification information are as follows:

**Regional site:**

**Team code:**

Your regional site was assigned to you per Page 6 of the *Mock Trial Handbook*. ***VLRE will be in contact with you shortly if your regional site is marked "floater."***

Per the *Mock Trial Handbook*, the drop deadline for the Program is December 15<sup>th</sup>. No refunds will be provided after that date. Please contact VLRE at [mattr@govlre.org](mailto:mattr@govlre.org) or at 757-581-4056 to request that your team be dropped from the program.

**We highly recommend that all teams access the *Coach's Manual* on our website.** The Coach's Manual was written to guide teachers and parents through our educationally focused project-based learning program. Virginia Department of Education Objectives and multiple educational resources are included in the manual.

Please anticipate emails from VLRE as we move through the program year. You will be contacted by your regional coordinator regarding specific regional competition information after November 15<sup>th</sup>.

We look forward to seeing your team compete at the regional competition! Please contact us if you need any additional information.

Very truly yours,

Matthew Rossetini, Esq  
Executive Director and State Coordinator  
Virginia Law Related Education Institute



## **Directions to William and Mary Law School**

613 South Henry St.  
Williamsburg, Virginia 23185

### **From Richmond via I-95, I-295, or I-64 (points north and west of Richmond)**

1. Take I-64 East to exit 238 (VA 143, Colonial Williamsburg/US 60/Camp Perry)
2. Turn right onto VA 143 towards Williamsburg/Jamestown/Yorktown
3. In 0.5 miles make a slight right and continue on VA 132
4. Continue 2.6 miles (you will drive through the center of historic Colonial Williamsburg) and turn left into the parking lot of the Law School

### **From Petersburg via I-85 (Southside Virginia)**

1. Take the I-95 North exit on the left toward Richmond
2. In 0.4 miles take the Wythe St/Washington St exit (Exit 69) toward historic Old Towne Petersburg
3. In 0.3 miles merge onto E Wythe St toward US-301 South
4. In 0.7 miles keep right at the fork to go on VA-36
5. In 4.5 miles merge onto I-295 North toward Washington
6. In 18 miles merge onto I-64 East (Exit 28) toward Norfolk and follow the directions above

### **From I-64 (Tidewater/Hampton Roads and the Eastern Shore)**

1. Take I-64 west to VA 199 (Exit 242A) toward Williamsburg/Jamestown
2. In 3.7 miles turn right onto S Henry St/VA-132 (the first right immediately after crossing the Colonial Parkway bridge)
3. Follow S. Henry Street for 1.5 miles and William and Mary Law School is on the right



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

## Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition

### Preliminary Schedule

(subject to change)

Friday, March XX, 20XX

7:00 am to 8:00 am	Registration in the main lobby (present your official roster)
8:00 am to 8:30 am	Coaches meeting in the McGlothlin Court Room (coaches only)
8:30 am to 9:00 am	Judges meeting (teams report to their assigned courtrooms)
9:00 am to 11:30 am	Round One
11:30 pm to 12:30 pm	Break for lunch
12:30 pm to 3:00 pm	Round Two
3:30 pm to 6:00 pm	Round Three

Saturday, March XX, 20XX

8:30 am to 9:00 am	Judges meeting (teams report to their assigned courtroom)
9:00 am to 11:30 am	Round Four
11:30 to 1:00 pm	Break for lunch, VLRE Annual Meeting (open to all)
1:00 pm to 3:30 pm	Round Five for top ten team placement (the top two teams meet in the McGlothlin Court Room to decide the state championship)
1:30 pm to 2:15 pm	Awards ceremony in the McGlothlin Court Room (teams 30 to 11)
4:00 pm to 4:45 pm	Awards ceremony in the McGlothlin Court Room (teams 10 to 1)

Colleagues,

I hope that you and your students are enjoying high school mock trial! One way to enhance this experience is to scrimmage another mock trial team in your area.

**Why scrimmage?**

Scrimmaging provides students with an opportunity to practice skills in a real-time environment. Student become comfortable competing in a competition setting, as well as refine certain techniques.

**Who should scrimmage?**

First year teams are highly encouraged to scrimmage. New teams should focus on developing fundamental skills to secure the best educational experience at the competition. For experienced teams, scrimmaging allows for the refinement and perfection of higher level mock trial skills.

**Dose scrimmaging give away my solution?**

No. The goal of mock trial is not to win the case on the merits, but to instead present the best solution to a mock trial problem. Team members are scored on their understanding of the facts, law, courtroom procedures, and rules of evidence, all of which can be assessed at a scrimmage. State teams often scrimmage each other the day before the start of the National High School Mock Trial Competition.

**Should I run my entire case?**

Teams do not need to run their entire case at a scrimmage, though new teams are encouraged to do so to gain experience prior to the competition. Experienced teams should consider concentrating on basic aspects of the case, and save unique solutions to the mock trial problem for the state competition.

**How do I schedule a scrimmage?**

Your regional coordinator will determine the interest in a scrimmage.



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

## Team Roster

Team Identification Letter Assigned at Registration: \_\_\_\_\_

If the team is the **prosecution/plaintiff** the roles are assigned as follows:

Attorneys		
	Name	Assignment
1		
2		
3		
Witnesses		
	Name	Assignment
1		
2		
3		
Timer		

If the team is the **defense** the roles are assigned as follows:

Attorneys		
	Name	Assignment
1		
2		
3		
Witnesses		
	Name	Assignment
1		
2		
3		

Team substitutions must be handwritten in this space with a copy turned into registration prior to the round in which the substitution occurs:

Substitution		
	Name	Assignment
1		
2		
3		



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

**SCORING JUDGE'S SCORE SHEET**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Round: \_\_\_\_\_

School Numbers Prosecution: \_\_\_\_\_ Defense: \_\_\_\_\_

Rate the performance of each team member on a scale of 1 to 10, recording one score in each box.

Do **NOT** use fractions. 1-2= not effective 3-4= fair 5-6= good 7-8= excellent 9-10= outstanding

Ballot		Prosecution	Defense
<b>Opening statements</b>			
<b>Prosecution first witness</b>	Direct Examination		
	Cross Examination		
	Witness Performance		
<b>Prosecution second witness</b>	Direct Examination		
	Cross Examination		
	Witness Performance		
<b>Prosecution third witness</b>	Direct Examination		
	Cross Examination		
	Witness Performance		
<b>Defense first witness</b>	Direct Examination		
	Cross Examination		
	Witness Performance		
<b>Defense second witness</b>	Direct Examination		
	Cross Examination		
	Witness Performance		
<b>Defense third witness</b>	Direct Examination		
	Cross Examination		
	Witness Performance		
<b>CLOSING ARGUMENTS</b>			
<b>TEAM TOTALS</b> (add scores in each column)			

Please deliver ballot to coordinator before critique.

\_\_\_\_\_

Tiebreaker (in case of tie, circle the party that won this round)

(Signature of Judge)

PROSECUTION

DEFENSE



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

### INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Round: \_\_\_\_\_

School Codes Prosecution: \_\_\_\_\_ Defense: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rank the top four attorneys and witnesses in this round and circle which side of the case he or she was on. Please use the real names of the witnesses, not their characters.

<b>Best Attorneys</b>	<i>(circle side)</i>		<b>Best Witnesses</b>	<i>(circle side)</i>	
1. _____	P	D	1. _____	P	D
2. _____	P	D	2. _____	P	D
3. _____	P	D	3. _____	P	D
4. _____	P	D	4. _____	P	D





Virginia Law Related Education Institute

**SCORING RUBRIC**

POINTS	PERFORMANCE	CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING STUDENT PERFORMANCE
1-2	Not Effective	Unsure of self, illogical, uninformed, not prepared, speaks incoherently, ineffective in communication.
3-4	Fair	Minimally informed and prepared. Performance is passable but lacks depth in terms of knowledge of task and materials. Communications lack clarity and conviction.
5-6	Good	Good, solid, but less than spectacular performance. Can perform outside the script but with less confidence than when using script. Logic and organization are adequate, but not outstanding. Grasps major aspects of the case, but does not convey mastery of same. Communications are clear and understandable, but could be stronger in fluency and persuasiveness.
7-8	Excellent	Fluent, persuasive, clear and understandable. Organizes materials and thoughts well and exhibits mastery of the case and materials.
9-10	Outstanding	Superior in qualities listed for "Excellent" rating. Thinks well on feet, is logical, kept poise under duress. Can sort out essential from the nonessential and uses time effectively to accomplish major objectives. Demonstrates the unique ability to utilize all resources to emphasize vital points of the trial.

**Factors to Consider**

**OPENING STATEMENTS** - Provided a case overview; mentioned the key witnesses stated the relief requested; and provided a clear and concise description of their case.

**DIRECT EXAMINATION** - Used properly phrased questions (who, what, where, when, how); used proper courtroom procedure; demonstrated understanding of issues and facts; properly introduced evidence; defended objections in clear, concise terms; used time effectively; and complied with all rules of the competition and spirit of fair play.

**CROSS EXAMINATION** - Used leading questions; properly impeached witnesses; raised proper objections and stated reasons clearly; knew Rules of Evidence and did not overuse objections; was courteous of opponent; and complied with rules of competition and spirit of fair play.

**WITNESSES** - Credible; understood facts; responded spontaneously; poised and observed courtroom decorum.

**CLOSING ARGUMENTS** - Summarized the evidence; emphasized the supporting points of their own case and damaged the opponent's; concentrated on the important, not the trivial; applied the applicable law; and responded to the judge's questions with poise.

**TIMING** – Points may be deducted if a team member does not adhere to timing requirements



Virginia Law Related Education Institute  
**CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUES**

An important aspect of the mock trial educational process is the critique provided by the trial and scoring judges at the end of each round. The comments and suggestions on this page are meant to assist you in your role as educator about the law and our legal system.

**Please read these comments and try to give students positive suggestions that will help them do better next time, as well as understand how our justice system works. Critiques for each round should last no more than eight minutes per team.**

- For many students, the critique is the most valuable part of the competition. They learn from hearing *specifically* what they did incorrectly and what they did correctly.
- Humor is a welcome tension reliever during the critique.
- Your comments should bear in mind the educational goals of the competition.
- Remember that you are helping *educate, guide and nurture* students. Treat students with the respect that you expect to receive from them and let them see why you volunteered your time and effort to the competition.
- Encourage questions during the critique.
- Remember you are a role model for the students and an ambassador for your profession.
- Let students know that not all attorneys use the same methods and techniques. Differences of opinions regarding style of trial presentations are common.

**These are some suggestions on how to best provide your valuable feedback to students**

"Perhaps an alternative way of handling the questioning of that witness would have been to..."

"Your opening statement was good, but it may have been even better if you had..."

"I cannot recall hearing evidence about ..., which would have helped your client's case. If you did include such evidence, I suggest that next time you make it somehow stand out stronger by..."

VLRE is committed to providing our participating students with a positive experience. Remember that you do not know the background or circumstances of these young people. As such, please do not do any of the following,

- Criticize students for their dress.
- Expect high school students to understand all that law students or lawyers understand.
- Talk down to students.



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRIAL JUDGES

Thank you for participating in the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition! By volunteering your time, you are furthering the analytical education of Virginia students in four distinct ways:

- Increasing their understanding of the judicial process
- Developing and refining their speaking, listening, writing and analytical skills
- Encouraging teamwork, cooperation, and respect for fellow teammates, and
- Furthering their understanding of law-related education

Please follow these instructions to provide as close to a uniform experience as possible to our participating teams.

### The Round Begins

Your courtroom will be made ready prior to the start of each round. Your courtroom may be an actual courtroom, a mock courtroom, or classroom. In the case of a classroom, all efforts will be made to arrange the room to best simulate a courtroom setting.

As in a real courtroom, the prosecution/plaintiff will sit closest to the jury box. Three attorneys from each team will sit at the litigant's table. Team timers will sit in assigned seats. Witnesses will sit immediately behind the attorneys if possible. Only the six team members playing in the round may talk to each other. No motions for sequestration are permitted.

Teams will exchange a copy of their team rosters with you, the opposing team, and the scoring judges. The team roster allows the teams to identify the gender of witnesses, as well as allows scoring judges the opportunity to write the names of participants on the scoring sheet.

### Pretrial

Call the court to order. The attorneys for each side will stand and enter their appearances. Request that the parties advise you of any stipulations already entered into the evidence.

Here are some issues you may encounter at pretrial:

- Do not entertain any motions except to strike testimony following a successful objection to its admission.
- Do not allow the use of demonstrative evidence, aides or costuming during the trial unless specifically allowed by the problem.
- Please set forth your preference for marking of exhibits.
- Require opening statements to be delivered at the start of the trial; no objections are allowed during opening statements.

## The Trial

You have three responsibilities at trial: timing, evidentiary objections, and objections to the rules of mock trial.

Timing - Timers are team members who act as neutral parties during the trial. Each timer is provided with a set of cards setting forth the remaining time in a round and will simultaneously keep time. You do not have to keep track of time; the timers are responsible for bringing any time violations to your attention. Both teams must call all three witnesses per round. Mock trial timing follows trial procedure as follows:

1. Opening Statement - *5 minutes each side*
2. Direct and Cross of All Plaintiff/Prosecution Witnesses - *25 minutes total for plaintiff/prosecution, 20 minutes total for defense*
3. Direct and Cross of all Defense Witnesses - *25 minutes total for defense, 20 minutes total for plaintiff/prosecution*
4. Recess Prior to Closing – *5 minutes*
5. Closing Argument - *5 minutes each side (including prosecution/plaintiff rebuttal)*
6. Rebuttal - *The amount of time reserved*

Timers should be within 15 seconds of each other or notify you of a discrepancy, which you may correct as you see fit. Time stops only for objections and questioning from the judge. Time does not stop for introduction of exhibits. You may grant brief extensions of time when warranted (e.g., to finish a thought).

Evidentiary Objections – Virginia High School Mock Trial follows the National High School Mock Trial Rules of Evidence except that all witnesses are pre-sworn, and no oath is given. These rules are substantially like the Federal Rules of Evidence. If there is a discrepancy between Mock Trial Rules and Virginia Rules of Evidence, you should use the Mock Trial Rules.

Allow students the opportunity to argue their objections and respond to one another. Time constraints, however, should be taken into consideration and objection battles should not last longer than a couple minutes. Rule on the objection that the attorney made, not on the objection that they maybe should have made. Do not object for either side or rule *sua sponte*.

Teams may make an objection for unfair extrapolation, which bars a witness from testifying in a manner inconsistent with the facts in the trial problem. Encourage teams to attack unfair extrapolations through impeachment and closing arguments. See the attached bench memo for further instructions on this issue.

Alleged Competition Rules Violation – In addition to the Rules of Evidence, students are bound by the Rules of Virginia High School Mock Trial. These rules are designed to keep the playing field even. See the attached bench memo in the event of an alleged violation.



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

## Bench Memo

Evidentiary Objections - Only the following objections are allowed under the rules of mock trial:

Judicial notice (Rule 201)

Relevance (Rules 401-411)

Privileges (Rule 501)

Witnesses

General rule of competency (Rule 601)

Need for personal knowledge (Rule 602)

Impeachment (Rules 607-609)

Religious beliefs or opinions (Rule 610)

Mode and order of interrogation and presentation (Rule 611)

*Handle the following objections as follows*

**Beyond the scope** - cross *shall not* be limited to the scope of the direct examination, but may inquire into any relevant facts or matters contained in the witness statement including all reasonable inferences and may inquire as to material and admissible admissions

**Leading question** – as regularly administered

**Control of proceedings** – includes badgering, non-responsive, speculation, etc.

Refreshing a witness's memory/prior statements (Rules 612-613)

Opinions and expert testimony (Rules 701-705)

Hearsay (Rules 801-805)

*Recognize only the following exceptions:*

- a. admission by a party opponent
- b. prior statement under oath
- c. present sense impression
- d. excited utterance
- e. state of mind
- f. statements made for purposes of medical diagnosis
- g. recorded recollection
- h. records of regularly conducted activity
- i. dying declaration
- j. declaration against interest

Unfair extrapolation – This is a special Mock Trial Objections (Mock Trial Rule 2.3)

A fair extrapolation is one that is neutral. Unfair extrapolations are best attacked through impeachment and closing arguments. If a witness is asked information not contained in the witness' statement, the answer must be consistent with the statement and may not materially affect the witness' testimony or any substantive issue of the case. Objections are "unfair extrapolation," or "This information is beyond the scope of the statement of facts." Your possible rulings can include,

- a) No extrapolation has occurred
- b) An unfair extrapolation has occurred
- c) The extrapolation was fair, or
- d) Ruling is taken under advisement.

The decision of the presiding judge regarding extrapolations or evidentiary matters is final.

Violation of Mock Trial Rules – Follow these instructions if you run into a Rules of Mock Trial issue. You may request the assistance of the state coordinator or his or her designee for help at any time, but you are responsible for the final ruling.

1. If a team member complains of a violation during the round, advise the team that they may file their dispute with the court immediately following the conclusion of the round.
2. At the end of the round, if a team believes that a substantial rules violation has occurred, a team attorney must indicate to you that the team intends to file a dispute.
3. Excuse the scoring panel from the courtroom and provide the complaining team with a dispute form. The team members playing in that round only may discuss the issue before submitting the form, but they may not talk with their sponsor, coach or non-competing team members.
4. Review the written dispute and determine whether it should be heard or denied. If the dispute is denied, record the reason for your denial, announce your ruling, and turn the dispute form in with the score sheets.
5. If you feel that the issue warrants a hearing, provide the form to opposing counsel for their written response. Once the team records its response and provides it to you, ask each team to designate a spokesperson from the members playing in that round only.
  - a. Spokespersons will have three minutes to prepare their arguments.
  - b. Conduct a hearing on the dispute, providing each team's spokesperson three minutes for a presentation (you may question the spokesperson and the spokesperson may not talk with anyone else at this point).
  - c. Adjourn the court and record your decision on the form.
  - d. If you rule that a "substantial" rule violation occurred, advise the scoring judges of the dispute and provide a summary of each team's argument. The scoring judges will consider the dispute before reaching their final scoring decisions.



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

## Dispute Resolution Sheet

Round: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of bench judge: \_\_\_\_\_

Complaining Party team ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly set forth the nature of your alleged violation:

Was a hearing necessary? Yes  No

Opposing party's written response (if a hearing is necessary):

If a hearing occurred, who were the spokespersons?

Complaining party: \_\_\_\_\_

Defending party: \_\_\_\_\_

Your ruling:



Virginia Law Related Education Institute

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCORING JUDGES

Thank you for participating in the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition! By volunteering your time, you are furthering the analytical education of Virginia students in four distinct ways:

- Increasing their understanding of the judicial process
- Developing and refining their speaking, listening, writing and analytical skills
- Encouraging teamwork, cooperation, and respect for fellow teammates, and
- Furthering their understanding of law related education

Please follow these instructions to provide as close to a uniform experience as possible to our participating teams.

**Scoring sheet** - You will be provided a scoring sheet for each round. Both teams will present a team roster to you prior to trial. Please use that roster to fill in the names for all participating team members (either as attorney or witness). Teams do not have to disclose to each other the order in which they will present witnesses, so do not disclose that information.

**The Rubric** – The competition uses a standard rubric or scoring method to grade team members. The rubric allows for an objective score based on the performance of each team member. Criteria for evaluating performance and factors to consider are provided as guidance. You may deduct points if a team member goes over a time limit without a judge’s permission. You may not award or deduct points based on a team member’s attire or physical issue.

**Individual ranking** – Rank the top four attorneys and top four witnesses for each round on your ballot. Your rankings will be used to determine individual awards at the end of the competition.

**Violation of Mock Trial Rules** – If a team reports a rules violation at conclusion of the trial, the judge may retrieve your scoring sheet and excuse you from the courtroom to conduct a hearing. If the judge finds a violation, he or she will report the violation, the arguments made by each team, and his or her decision. You may deduct points based on the judge’s decision at your discretion. The same procedure may occur if a rule violation is reported after a round is complete.

**Post-trial critique** – You are encouraged to participate in a post-trial critique of each team. Please use the constructive critique form as guidance when speaking with our hard-working Virginia students, many of whom find this opportunity highly beneficial if not inspiring!





## INSTRUCTIONS FOR TEAM SPONSORS AND COACHES

Team sponsors and coaches have a tremendous impact on the development of their teams. Sponsors and coaches should keep in mind that the primary goal of mock trial is to educate students about the law and to develop their analytical thinking and oratory skills. While the competitive aspect of mock trial is fun and engaging, sponsors and coaches should remember that they are responsible for ensuring that their students also learn about civility and fair play.

Virginia High School Mock Trial takes seriously the need for a fair and balanced competition with the goal of educating students. VLRE asks that all team sponsors and coaches keep in mind this helpful list of best and discouraged practices.

### Best Practices

- Prepare and duplicate your team roster in advance of the competition (handwritten rosters will not be accepted). Include one roster to be presented at registration. Rosters must include the following information:
  - Team identification number (assigned at registration)
  - Name of team sponsor
  - The name and position of each attorney (opening, closing, cross, etc.), and
  - The name and gender of each witness, including the team member's name
- Encourage all students to treat other teams with respect and courtesy
- Allow students to try new and creative ideas, but veto anything that could be deemed unethical or offensive
- Take notes during rounds to give constructive feedback to students
- Help your team understand what constitutes appropriate courtroom attire, but keep in mind that some students may have limited means

### Discouraged Practices

- Do not write or prepare all the material for students – students should be encouraged to do their own work and sponsors should edit and critique material
- Do not yell at or belittle students
- Do not get into arguments with other team sponsors or competition staff
- Do not attempt to communicate with your team during a round unless there is an emergency (this includes nonverbal communication)



## Social Media Guide

### Virginia High School Mock Trial Program

Promoting the activities and accomplishments of the Virginia Law Related Education Institute (“VLRE”) allows our partners, donors, attendees, and the community an ability to see the incredible opportunities we provide to our attendees. We encourage social media use as you prepare for and attend the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition (“VHSMTC”). Follow these guidelines so that we maintain the positive and educational value of this opportunity:

1. Link all mock trial competition related social media comments directly to VLRE social media accounts. These accounts will be provided to you by a VLRE representative.
2. Please submit posts of your competition preparation. We want to see how much fun you are having at practice, but DO NOT give away your solution or strategy prior to the event.
3. Please submit posts of your team and its members during the competition, including during rounds. The following rules apply if you are going to submit a post during each round:
  - a. Both teams must both agree to the use of social media prior to each round and advise the judge of their decision. Photography only by spectators is allowed during all rounds.
  - b. Team members actively participating in each around may not have electronic devices of any kind on their possession except a stop watch for team timers.
  - c. You may not post specifics of the trial during the competition. For example,
    - i. You can post “Johnny makes his opening statement to the court!”
    - ii. You cannot post “The other team argued that our witness is lying. Sad!”
  - d. Any violation of these rules will be considered a violation of mock trial rules and are subject to the mock trial rule resolution procedure set forth in the Mock Trial Handbook.
4. The rules of decorum as set forth in the Mock Trial Handbook apply to this policy. Do not use social media to complain, disparage, criticize, or otherwise state a complaint or concern about the VHSMTC. All competition issues should be addressed to the state coordinator.
5. Many school divisions and schools implement policies regarding the use of social media and academic honesty. VLRE will cooperate with these entities if contacted for information regarding potential rules violations at the VHSMTC.

**Enjoy the competition responsibly!**



## Welcome to the Gallery! (For our parents and guests)

Students at this competition will present their solution to the state mock trial problem. Sitting in the gallery can be very interesting if you know what you are looking for during each round.

### **What are you watching?**

You are watching a “mock trial” or courtroom simulation. Unlike a trial where the goal is to win the case, mock trial requires students to develop a solution to a legal and factual problem and successfully deliver it to a panel of legal professionals.

### **How is each round structured?**

Each round adheres to the follows trial procedure (approximately 2 hours):

- Pre-trial
- Opening Statements
- Direct and Cross of three defense Witnesses
- A five-minute recess
- Closing Argument and rebuttal
- Feedback from a panel of legal professionals

### **What should I look for when watching a round?**

Scoring judges use a rubric-based points system to score teams on the effectiveness of each member. You should look for the following as you watch from the gallery:

- Do I understand the team’s solution?
- Does the team’s solution make sense?
- Is the team prepared to present their solution?
- Does the solution align with all parts of the team’s presentation?
- Do the attorneys understand courtroom procedure and use it to their advantage?
- Do the witnesses portray an authentic persona that furthers the solution?
- Are you watching what you would consider a “realistic” trial?

### **How can I support my child and their team?**

Mock trial is a dramatic play written by the students themselves. The audience should let the play unfold in front of them and wait until the end to applaud. Sit back and enjoy the show!

***Thank you for supporting law-related education in the Commonwealth of Virginia!***

Virginia Law Related Education Institute Holds  
20XX Annual Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition

WILLIAMSBURG, March XX, 20XX—This past weekend, the Virginia Law Related Education Institute (“VLRE”) hosted the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition. Competing were nine teams comprised of over eighty students from a diverse range of public, private, and homeschool communities throughout the commonwealth. The winning team this year was \_\_\_\_\_, which is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_, Virginia. \_\_\_\_\_ will now advance to the National High School Mock Trial Championship in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_, CT this May.

The Virginia High School Mock Trial Program provides students with an analytically-based law-related educational opportunity focused on access to justice. Mock Trial, a model of project-based learning, is a national educational competition that requires students not to win a case on its merits, but instead deliver the best solution to a complex legal problem. The students rely on their ability to think critically and analytically, as well as their communication skills to convince a panel of judges. The judges in this competition included Judges, local practicing attorneys, members of the Virginia Bar, and law students from the College of William and Mary Law School. Asked about the students’ performances, Matthew Rossettini, Chief Executive Officer of VLRE, commented, “I am excited about the future of law related education and I think we saw students throughout the commonwealth understanding the impact and importance of access to justice in our society.”

Founded in November, 2016, VLRE provides analytical based law related educational opportunities to high school students. The competition was hosted by William and Mary Law School and in partnership with the Center for Legal and Court Technology. In addition to the Mock Trial competition, VLRE offers teachers and parent educators training and support so that they may provide their students with an educationally-based mock trial experience.

To learn more about VLRE, please contact [mattr@govlre.org](mailto:mattr@govlre.org).

All the best,  
Matthew Rossettini  
Executive Director  
757-581-4056  
[mattr@govlre.com](mailto:mattr@govlre.com)

**About the Virginia Law Related Education Institute:**

The mission of the Virginia Law Related Education Institute (“VLRE”) is to develop students’ analytical abilities as they explore fundamental concepts related to access to justice. VLRE works in partnership with the Center for Legal and Court Technology at the College of William and Mary Law School and is affiliated with the National High School Mock Trial Championship. For more information visit [www.govlre.org](http://www.govlre.org).

**About the Center for Legal and Court Technology:**

The Center for Legal and Court Technology is an entrepreneurial public service initiative of the Marshall-Wythe Law School at the College of William & Mary and the National Center for State Courts, dedicated to advancing the efficient use of technology in the administration of justice. For more information, please visit: <http://www.legaltechcenter.net/>



Virginia Law Related Education Institute  
*Focusing on Access to Justice*

March XX, 20XX

**Congratulations on winning the Virginia High School Mock Trial Competition!**

As state champion, you earned the right to represent the Commonwealth of Virginia at the National High School Mock Trial Competition being held in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ from May XX to May XX, 20XX. For more information on the competition, including transportation, hotel options, and a schedule of events, please visit <http://www.2017nationalmocktrial.org/>.

I may also attend the competition as the statewide coordinator for Virginia. My role is to assist you in any way that I can, including helping you to register your team at the competition. I will also be available if you need me. My cell phone number is (757) 581-4056.

VLRE submitted our state association fee to the National High School Mock Trial Championship. Your team is responsible for the team registration fee and all additional costs related to the competition. Your team must notify me at [mattr@govlre.com](mailto:mattr@govlre.com) of your intent to participate in the national championship by 5:00 PM on Friday, March XX, 20XX. You will be recognized as the winner of the Virginia competition even if you are unable to attend the national competition.

We at VLRE are all very proud of your accomplishment!

Very truly yours,

Matthew Rossetini, Esq.  
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