



Topic for the Month:

Mock Trial

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High School Mock Trial Tournaments: For the past 21 years, the State Bar of Wisconsin has sponsored a state wide mock trial competition for high school students. The mock trials are structured like "real" court trials. In advance of the competition, all mock trial teams are provided with a packet of information, containing the factual scenario, evidentiary rules and time limits on presentation (i.e. opening statements; witness testimony; closing arguments). The mock trial competition helps high school students better understand how the legal system works and what roles judges, lawyers, bailiffs, juries and witnesses play in the system.

The annual mock trial competition is funded with grants from the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, the Wisconsin Law Foundation and the Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies. "The growth and success of this program is incredible," notes Dee Runnas, coordinator of the program. "We went from 85 teams in 1983-84 to over 170 in last year's program. The mock trial program is the most highly visible public service project the Bar has to offer."

Format of Mock Trial Competition: Mock trial teams consist of 6-12 students who, with the help of a teacher coach and attorney coach(es) learn about the legal process and trial procedure. Circuit court judges and attorneys also participate in the mock trial process. Each mock trial requires a presiding judge and two "presenting" judges. The presiding judge makes rulings on evidentiary issues. The presenting judges grade each aspect of the trial, including opening statements, witness testimony, direct examinations, cross-examinations and closing arguments.

In 2004, Rhinelander High School won the state championship and took second place in the 2004 National Mock Trial Competition.

2005 Mock Trial Regional Divisions: The mock trial competition is conducted throughout the state of Wisconsin. The 7 regional divisions are: Region 1 - Eau Claire (10 teams); Region 2 - - Wausau (4 teams); Region 3 - Green Bay (8 teams); Region 4 - Wisconsin Rapids (10 teams); Region 5 - Appleton (10 teams); Region 6 - La Crosse (10 teams); Region 7 - Madison (18 teams). The regional rounds of competition will be conducted on **February 12, 2005**. A list of teams within each Region can be found at www.legalexplorer.com. This website also lists all Regional winners for 2004.

Regional winners advance to the state competition in mid March. The tournament culminates in May with Wisconsin's winner competing at the national championship in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Other Mock Trial Opportunities: In addition to sponsoring the annual mock trial tournament for high school students, the State Bar of Wisconsin organizes a public mock trial at the **Wisconsin State Fair** and **distributes mock trial scripts for use in the classroom**. If you are interested in the mock trial program, the contact person at the State Bar is Dee Runnas. She can be contacted by phone (800-728-7788) or e-mail (drunnaas@wisbar.org)

For the past 15-years the Wisconsin Academy of Trial Lawyers (WATL) and the State Bar of Wisconsin have given demonstrations on the importance of our judicial system. The mock jury trial presentations took place last year at the **Waukesha County Fair**. The mock trial presentations have been designed to break down the public's mystique of courts, judges and lawyers while promoting a better understanding of our legal system.



Our Firm Is Involved: For the past 15 years, attorneys at our firm have been actively involved with Region 3 mock trial competitions. This year, attorneys Christina Peterson and John D'Angelo are attorney coaches for a local high school team. Previously, partner Michael Kirschling was an attorney coach, for many years. Over the years, many of our attorneys have also volunteered to serve as judges. Our firm is committed to educating the community on our legal system.

