



January 11, 2022

Dear Mock Trial Coaches, Teachers, and Students:

In light of the recent COVID surge in San Diego County, and information that a number of your teams have students and/or coaches who are currently ill or have been exposed to the virus, the San Diego County High School Mock Trial Committee has been carefully analyzing whether public health circumstances require us to either postpone the competition in the hope that the COVID infection rate will abate or conduct it on the originally set dates in a virtual format. We are well aware that a virtual format does not offer a full courtroom experience and, that for some, there are concerns about access to WiFi and computer equipment needed to participate virtually. We also know that postponement is not a guarantee that public health circumstances will appreciably change and, ultimately, we may have to switch to a virtual format.

While these decisions certainly have an impact on the Committee's resources and our ability to recruit judicial and attorney volunteers, most importantly, we understand they have the greatest impact on those of you who have been preparing and bonding as teams for months. Therefore, we conducted a survey of all coaches and teachers of registered teams via email last week, offering both postponement options or a virtual competition on the previously announced dates. We want to thank the 57 respondents who timely answered the survey and offered informative and thoughtful comments. Of those responding, 73% favored postponing the competition to one of two proposed time periods. We appreciated learning that most schools have a scheduled spring break in the latter part of March or in April (many during a two-week time period in April; San Diego Unified having theirs the last week of March) and, of course, we would not at this late date schedule something during those time periods. Of the 49 responses that favored postponing the competition, a greater number expressed a preference to schedule it in late February/early March. We also note that no team advised that they would be unavailable (other than periods slated for spring breaks) if we were to postpone.

**Based on the results of the survey, as well as other considerations, the Committee has decided to postpone the competition to commence at the end of February and to conclude by March 10, 2022, in the hope that circumstances will permit an in-person competition.**

We will begin with two dates which were previously announced for the end of the competition: Round One is now rescheduled for Saturday, February 26; Round Two is now rescheduled for March 1, 2022. Round Three is scheduled for March 3, 2022. Round Four is now set for March 7, 2022. As previously mentioned, we will be forgoing a semi-final round. The final round will be scheduled for March 9 or 10, 2022, and that date will be selected by the end of this week. We are still evaluating the best date for holding the awards ceremony and will notify you of that date in the coming week. We know the condensed nature of this schedule (two rounds per week) is different than the schedule we have followed in the last few years, and will place greater demands on those organizing the competition and those participating. However, it affords a few advantages: 1) We will be using two dates which your teams should have already set aside to be in competition; 2) It may allow us to send a team to CRF's State Competition if they decide to hold it virtually and; 3) It does not interfere with any school district's spring break schedule.

You will be receiving additional communications via email and on the website over the coming days. In anticipation of an in person competition, we will be implementing a series of safety measures which will, at the very least, include mandatory mask wearing and social distancing. The final list of safety measures will be announced in the coming weeks.

I want to thank you for being so responsive to the Committee's inquiry, and for all you are doing to support our mock trial students. We sincerely hope that those of you who are suffering from COVID illness, who have ill family members, or have been exposed to the virus, will heal quickly and be restored to excellent health. We know these are trying times and admire the flexibility and commitment all of you have demonstrated!

With all best regards,

*Laura J. Birkmeyer*

Judge Laura J. Birkmeyer  
San Diego Superior Court  
Chair, San Diego County High  
School Mock Trial Committee

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