

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces:

2018 Mock Trial Competition begins next week

Preliminary rounds: January 23, 25 & 30, and February 1

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., Tulare County Courthouse, Visalia

Semi-finals: February 8, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. Tulare County Courthouse, Visalia

Finals: February 20, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., TCOE Conference Center, 6200 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia

The public is invited to watch 13 Tulare County high school teams compete in the annual Tulare County Mock Trial Competition beginning January 23. The Mock Trial teams are comprised of 10 to 20 students who take on the roles of lawyers, witnesses, court clerks and bailiffs. All teams must make their presentations based on identical hypothetical case materials. Each team, coached by local attorneys and school personnel, presents the case for both the prosecution and defense twice during the course of the competition. “The Mock Trial Competition is as exciting to watch as any courtroom drama,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “Our students do an incredible amount of preparation to understand the case law affecting their trial before taking on the roles of attorneys, witnesses and clerks. They do a masterful job of conducting themselves in court.”

All teams will present their cases before actual judges and attorneys, with three attorneys scoring each trial. The first four rounds and the semi-final round will take place in the Tulare County Superior Court building (third floor). Open to the public, the **trial dates are: January 23, 25 & 30, and February 1** (preliminary rounds); and **February 8** (semi-final round). Trials begin each night at 5:00 p.m. **The finals will take place**

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at the Tulare County Office of Education Redwood Conference Center (6200 S. Mooney Blvd.,

Visalia) on February 20 at 5:00 p.m. Members of the public, parents, students and teachers are welcome to attend any of the trials.

The teams competing in the 2018 Tulare County Mock Trial Competition represent Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School (Visalia), Exeter Union High School, Granite Hills High School (Porterville), Mission Oak High School (Tulare), Mt. Whitney High School (Visalia), Orosi High School, Redwood High School (Visalia), Tulare Union High School, Tulare Western High School, University Preparatory High School (Visalia) and Woodlake High School.

For 2018, Mock Trial student participants throughout California will be preparing the fictitious case entitled *People v. Davidson*, which is the trial of Casey Davidson, a resident of Acorn, California. Davidson faces a felony count of first degree murder for the death of Alex Thompson, another young resident of Acorn and member of Ultra Nats, an extremist nationalist group. The prosecution alleges that Davidson murdered Thompson in the same park where a political rally had taken place. Attendees gathered in the park to either protest or support a national radio political commentator who is critical of liberal immigration policies. The defense argues that Davidson did not murder Thompson and has an alibi for what happened at the time of death. According to the defense, Davidson was an activist in the nonviolent Equality for All (EFA) group and had a history of mediating behavior during conflict. The pretrial issue in *People v. Davidson* focuses on whether it is a search under the Fourth Amendment for the government to obtain routinely collected GPS location data from a third-party GPS provider. Law enforcement used such GPS information to gather evidence that Davidson had traveled to Thompson's residence several times in the days before his death.

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The Tulare County Office of Education would like to thank the many legal community volunteers who donate their time and expertise to make this competition possible. “Mock Trial is an extremely valuable competition,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “We applaud the teachers and attorney-coaches for investing many hours in preparing their students for this event – giving them a glimpse into the workings of our judicial system.”

The Mock Trial Program is sponsored by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, and co-sponsored by the California Department of Education, the State Bar of California, the Young Lawyers’ Association and the Daily Journal Corporation. The Tulare County Office of Education coordinates the program locally, with assistance from local attorneys and judges.

The champions from the final round of the Tulare County Mock Trial Competition will be eligible to compete in the annual state finals March 16-18 at the Central Justice Center in Santa Ana.

For more information, contact Scott Pierce at the Tulare County Office of Education at (559) 651-0562.

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