

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:

2010 Mock Trial Competition Begins January 26

Tulare County Mock Trial season begins January 26 with 12 Tulare County high schools teams participating: Dinuba High School, El Diamante High School (Visalia), Exeter High School, Farmersville High School, Golden West High School (Visalia), Lindsay High School, Mt. Whitney High School (Visalia), Orosi High School, Redwood High School (Visalia), Tulare Union High School, Tulare Western High School and Woodlake High School. 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 (third floor). Open to the public, the trial dates are: January 26 and 28 and February 2 and 4 (preliminary rounds), and February 9 (semi-final round). Trials begin each night at 5:30 p.m. The finals will take place at El Diamante Theatre on February 16 at 6:00 p.m. Parents, students and teachers are encouraged to attend each trial. Wrapping up the highlights of the season, all teams attend the Mock Trial Awards Banquet on February 23 to celebrate the work all participants have done in making this event a success.

This year's case is entitled *People v. Bratton*. It involves the trial of Jordan Bratton, a resident of the town of Hollyville, who is charged with murder in the First Degree of entertainment critic Preston Palmer. The prosecution alleges that Bratton – an up-and-coming comedian – grew angry with Palmer due to his

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negative reviews posted on two web sites, Twitter and YellUp. These negative reviews led Bratton to murder Palmer in Palmer's driveway via strangulation.

The defense alleges that Bratton had no part in the murder of Palmer. On the night of the murder, Bratton was at a comedy club working on material and hoping to get on stage. The defense further argues that Palmer's reviews had outraged many people, and thus it is unclear who murdered Palmer.

The pretrial issue involves the Fourth Amendment freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. The defense argues that a search was outside of the scope of the warrant. The defense claims that search was an invasion of Bratton's privacy and right to be secure from unreasonable search and seizure. The defense also contends that the "plain view" exception does not apply.

The prosecution argues that the search was legal because the YellUp account and threat fall under the section of the warrant authorizing the search of "records and information relating to the purchase of items possibly involved in the murder of Preston Palmer." The prosecution holds that even if the search was outside the scope of the warrant, the discovery of the threat falls under the "plain view" exception and thus should be allowed as evidence. In preparation to present this case, students must be familiar with California Penal Codes, Jury Instructions and 12 similar California cases.

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, will present the case for both the prosecution and defense twice during the course of the competition.

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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, as well as the organizations that make it possible for all Mock Trial students to attend the Banquet at no charge.

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, Robert Dempsie, District Attorney's Office, and Sherry Pacillas, Court Compliance Analyst.

Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak commends participating schools and students, "Mock Trial is an extremely rigorous competition. We applaud the teachers and attorney-coaches for investing so many hours in preparing their students for this event. It's an experience they will treasure for the rest of their lives."

The champions from the final round of the Tulare County Mock Trial Competition will be eligible to compete in the state finals in San Jose, California at the San Jose Hall of Justice, 190-200 West Hedding Street, San Jose, CA 95110. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania will be the host city of the National Mock Trial competition May 6-8, 2010.

For more information, contact Marsha Ingrao at 651-0680 or marshai@tcoe.org .

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