



## Administrative Office of the Courts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **State high school mock trial finals occur Friday and Saturday in Albuquerque**

ALBUQUERQUE – About 230 students from across New Mexico will participate Friday and Saturday in the finals of the state high school mock trial competition, which will be held at the Bernalillo County Metropolitan Court.

The first round of competition starts at 9 a.m. on Friday. The top team along with the winning courtroom artist and courtroom journalist in the [Gene Franchini New Mexico High School Mock Trial Program](#) will advance to the national championship, which will be held May 7-9 in Des Moines, Iowa.

Sixteen teams – each ranging from seven to fourteen students – will compete in the state finals. Students fill the roles of prosecuting and defense attorneys and as witnesses in presenting a hypothetical court case to a judge, who scores their performance. Several state and federal court judges are among those serving as judges in the competition. [Click here](#) to view this year’s mock trial case.

As in an actual trial, the teams present opening and closing arguments and the witnesses are questioned and cross-examined by the attorneys. The competition also includes students who serve as courtroom artists and journalists. The artists prepare sketches of the proceedings while the journalists write news stories based on what they observe in the trial.

“Mock trial gives students more than courtroom skills — it gives them a deeper understanding of how our justice system works and why civic participation matters,” said Kristen Leeds, executive director of the Center for Civic Values, which has administered and hosted the mock trial competition since 1978.

“By stepping into the roles of attorneys, witnesses, courtroom artists, and journalists, students learn firsthand the responsibility that comes with protecting the rule of law,” Leeds said.

Each team has a teacher coach, and most teams have one or more attorney coaches. About 50 teams participated in a qualifier competition in February, which determined who advanced to the state finals.

“The mock trial program provides students with valuable hands-on learning about the role of courts and the law in fairly and impartially resolving disputes in our society,” said Chief Justice David K. Thomson.

The mock trial program is named after the late Justice Gene Franchini, who served on the state Supreme Court from 1990 to 2002, and was a district judge for six years.

The [results of past mock trial competitions](#) are available at the New Mexico Activities Association website.

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NOTE: Press wishing to cover the competition at the Metropolitan Court should contact Camille Cordova at 505-841-9897 or [metrcrc@nmcourts.gov](mailto:metrcrc@nmcourts.gov)

For more information about the mock trial program contact Kristen Leeds at the Center for Civic Values, 505-764-9417 or [mocktrial@civicvalues.org](mailto:mocktrial@civicvalues.org)



Metropolitan Court Chief Judge Joshua J. Sánchez serves as a volunteer judge for the February 2024 Gene Franchini High School Mock Trial competition. (Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Court)