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Newton North, Winsor School to meet in Mock Trial State Championship

Final set for March 24 at Faneuil Hall

BOSTON, Mass. —**Newton North High School** and **the Winsor School** in Boston will meet for the Massachusetts Bar Association's 32nd Annual High School Mock Trial State Championship on Friday, March 24, at 10 a.m. in the historic Great Hall at Faneuil Hall.

The winning team will secure the state championship and advance to the national competition in Hartford, Connecticut, in May.

Both schools have a history of success in the Mock Trial State Championship. Newton North is the defending champion and has won 10 championships since 1988. The Winsor School has won four titles since 2010.

The state championship will be judged by a three-member panel similar to the process used at the national mock trial competition. The panel will be comprised of a presiding judge, who will conduct and score the trial, as well as two additional scoring judges. All three judges will score the trial in accordance with standard mock trial scoring procedures. Each judge's scorecard will constitute one ballot. The team listed as winner on the majority of ballots will be the Massachusetts champion.

This year's judging panel is: Hon. Howard J. Whitehead (ret.), presiding justice, Massachusetts Superior Court; Hon. Kenneth V. Desmond Jr., Massachusetts Appeals Court; and Hon. Lynn C. Rooney, Massachusetts District Court.

For the media: Media members wishing to attend/cover the state championship on March 24 are required to contact Mike Vigneux at 617-338-0675 in advance.

Mock Trial Program Background

Newton North and the Winsor School earned their regional titles, quarterfinal, semifinal and final berths by competing in trials throughout January, February and March. More than 1,500 students at more than 130 high schools across the state participate in the annual program, in which students turn their classrooms into courtrooms to assume the roles of both lawyers and witnesses.

This year's fictional case involves a defendant on trial for murder. The accused is a recent war veteran who raises as an insanity defense the medical condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to the charge of first degree murder. The case explores whether the defendant is actually suffering from PTSD and whether PTSD is a complete or mitigating defense to the crime which the defendant is accused of committing. The task of the prosecution will be to prove the defendant's culpability for his or her actions, while the defendant's challenge will be to establish a defense that will excuse, in the eyes of the law, some or all of the defendant's responsibility for his or her actions. This hypothetical case gives participants an opportunity not only to learn about a serious mental health issue, which faces many returning veterans, but also how the current state of the law addresses or fails to address the effect of PTSD in explaining otherwise criminal behavior.

The MBA's Mock Trial Program, which began in 1985, is administered by the Massachusetts Bar Association, with support from the Massachusetts Bar Foundation and Morrison Mahoney LLP. More than 100 lawyers across the state volunteer as coaches and judges.

Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.