

Nebraska State Bar Foundation & Nebraska Broadcasters Association

Judge Lyle Strom High School Mock Trial Student News Reporter Contest *A Guide to Reporting on the Courts*

Goal

The goal of the Student News Reporter Contest is to give students interested in a career in journalism or communications an opportunity to learn about courtroom reporting. The contest is a hands-on experience in a courtroom. Additionally, the contest allows student journalists to learn about courtroom procedures and the trial process. At the State Championship, students are mentored by news reporters and judges.

Participation

Any high school student who wants to participate in the contest can, regardless of whether there is a mock trial team at the contestant's home school. If a student does not have a mock trial team, they contact the Nebraska State Bar Foundation for a list of area mock trial teams in order to watch a regional trial.

The top 6 at large students will continue onto the state championship. The top 6 students with a mock trial team will continue onto state.

The Contest

Regional Mock Trial

- All students sign up for Mock Trial Student News Contest with the Nebraska State Bar Foundation.
- Student writers are encouraged to read the mock trial charging documents and witness statements and review the exhibits before the trial.
- Student reporters observe the first round of the Regional Mock Trial competition during mock trial regionals. All participants must watch a mock trial.
- Reporters are encouraged to take notes on a laptop or with pencil/paper. NO AUDIO OR DIGITAL RECORDINGS are allowed.
- Students are asked to write a 500- to 600-word story (word count includes the headline) on the trial. Stories must be typed.
- After writing the news article, students will submit it in PDF format to the NSBF via a google doc.
- Judges will score the first round of submissions.
- Students will receive their edited news articles back via email.
- All students will be notified as to whether or not they are moving onto the State Championship.

Mock Trial State Championship

- The top 6 at-large students and the top 6 students with a mock trial team are invited to the state championship where students will watch a State Mock Trial.
- Student writers are encouraged to read the mock trial charging documents and witness statements and review the exhibits before the trial.
- Reporters are encouraged to take notes on a laptop or with pencil/paper. NO AUDIO OR DIGITAL RECORDINGS are allowed.
- Students are given two hours to write a 500- to 600-word story (word count includes the headline) on the trial. Students may use their notes. Stories must be typed.
- Students must submit the article via google doc in PDF format by the end of the two hours. Late submissions will not be scored.
- Following the first state round, students eat lunch with media representatives and a member of the judiciary who will be available to answer questions and offer general advice.
- Students are asked to prepare questions in advance to ask the mentors about reporting on court proceedings.
- At the State Mock Trial Championship Banquet, the winner of the Student New Reporter Contest will be announced.

Scoring

Evaluators who are media professionals will score each article. Stories are scored based on content, accuracy, and balance. The student with the highest cumulative score is the winner. In the event of a tie, the evaluators will confer to determine a winner.

Recognition Banquet

The Mock Trial Student News Reporter winner will receive an award at the Recognition Banquet. Additionally, the school will receive a plaque. Student reporters are expected to attend the banquet with their Mock Trial team members and will be included in the recognition of their teams.

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