

Wabash College Moot Court Competition: 2007 Participant's Guide

Preliminary rounds of the Competition will be held in Baxter Hall on Saturday, October 20. The First Round will begin at 9:00 A.M., and the Second Round will begin at 11:00 A.M. Room assignments will be available outside of Baxter 114, beginning at 8:30 A.M. Each team, consisting of two (2) members, will argue in two rounds, once as Petitioners and once as Respondents.

<i>Party</i>	<i>Name in the Trial (District) Court</i>	<i>Result in the Trial (District) Court</i>	<i>Name in the Court of Appeals</i>	<i>Result in the Court of Appeals</i>	<i>Name in the Supreme Court</i>
Labine, Zimmer and Craig	Plaintiffs	Won	Appellees	Lost	Petitioners
Snider and LaSorda	Defendants	Lost	Appellants	Won	Respondents

1. THE PROBLEM:

- 1.1. The issue is whether a state's requirement of a photo identification card to vote is a violation of various constitutional protections, including mainly the Fourteenth Amendment's "Equal Protection Clause." The plaintiffs say it is an unfair and unconstitutional requirement, having the practical effect of disenfranchising the poor, minorities and the elderly; the state has defended the statute by saying that the statute is merely a law to regulate the conduct of an election and meets all constitutional requirements.
- 1.2. Three plaintiffs sued the governor and the election commissioner in the fictional state of Alston. The trial court said the law was unconstitutional and granted an injunction to stop its enforcement. The state of Alston appealed, and won in the Court of Appeals (that's one loss and one win each, for those of you keeping score). Now, the three plaintiffs are appealing to the United States Supreme Court.

2. DIVISION OF THE ARGUMENT:

- 2.1. Plaintiffs / Petitioners. We agree with the dissenting opinion. First Counsel: The level of inquiry or standard of review of the law should be high and strict. a/k/a

"strict scrutiny." This law burdens a fundamental right – the right to vote, and so courts should be very vigilant in protecting that right. Second counsel: Once we put this law under the bright light of strict scrutiny, it doesn't pass muster. It burdens a fundamental right and there's no compelling (let alone even good) state interest to justify doing that. It's unconstitutional.

- 2.2. Defendants: First counsel: The majority (main) opinion got it right. The State of Alston gets to pick things like where you go to vote, under the constitution. So, what's the big deal? Legislatures, not courts, get to decide time, place and manner of voting and courts should defer to the legislative determination. A low level of scrutiny, a rational basis, is all that's required here. Second counsel: ...and when we use that low level of scrutiny, the law passes muster. All we're trying to do is to prevent voter fraud. Maybe we could do it better, but so what? This isn't a chance to second guess how we think the law should have been passed – it's one chance to decide that it is constitutional.

3. ORAL ARGUMENT PROCEDURE:

- 3.1. You will be judged by a panel of three judges, usually made up of a mixture of practicing attorneys, professors and judges who have had moot court, trial and appellate experience.
- 3.2. Your argument should be stapled into a manila folder. It is NOT a crutch and DO NOT READ FROM IT VERBATIM. Use it for reference and to keep your place in your argument. Your folder should contain relevant facts, summaries of legal authorities or concepts, and other pertinent information.
- 3.3. When you enter the room, put your name and the side you will be arguing on the blackboard. If you are in a "courtroom" without a blackboard, the judges will ask your name and the respective side you are arguing and will write it on his/her evaluation sheet.
- 3.4. The Petitioner (Plaintiffs' lawyers) always argues first. When the judges ask if you are ready to proceed, respond "Yes, Your Honor."
- 3.5. The introduction both sides should use is "May it please the Court. My name is _____, and I represent _____, the [Petitioner or Respondent] in this appeal." The Petitioner is allowed rebuttal and MUST reserve rebuttal time. You ask for rebuttal immediately after your introduction. "At this time, I would like to reserve (1 to 3) minutes of my time for rebuttal."
- 3.6. You will be timed by one of the three (3) judges. The timer will remind you how much time you have left. EACH person gets ten minutes. This may sound like an eternity, but it will go by quickly once you get into your argument. You will get a "5 minutes" left signal card, and "2 minutes" left signal card, and "1 minute" left signal card and a STOP card. You won't believe how quickly the 5-minute card will be flashed at you.
- 3.7. When the STOP card is flashed, it means STOP regardless where you are in your argument, but don't stop mid-sentence. The best way to handle this is to say, "I see my time is has expired. May I have a moment to conclude?" The judge will

then grant you additional time to you to quickly finish your thought and cut to your prayer. More about the prayer later.

- 3.8. Pay respect to the Court. Be deferential, yet assert your client's position. Never interrupt a judge – let him/her get the question out before you start to answer it. Listen carefully to the question to ensure that you are really answering it. Never get mad at a judge or be argumentative – be respectful and assertive (have a conversation with the judges – don't run over them with a truck and call it advocacy!).
- 3.9. DON'T talk too fast. Speak clearly and in a moderate tone of voice. Don't dance behind the lectern. It is distracting, unprofessional and makes you appear nervous and tentative. Appear confident and collected (even if you don't feel it). Be calm and alert – you'll be amazed with how much it will enhance your argument. Dress appropriately. Conservative, dark suit and tie.

4. **PREPARING A SUCCESSFUL ARGUMENT:**

- 4.1. An oral argument has three basic parts – the introduction, the body of the argument itself, and the prayer.
- 4.2. The Petitioner must briefly state the RELEVANT facts of the case which should only last about one to two minutes. They must be fair, but can be slanted toward your theory of the case. Don't give facts not contained in the record. DON'T ARGUE THE FACTS: ARGUE THE LAW! The factual argument was made at trial and has already been won or lost. This is the appeal, and the issues are now legal rather than factual.
- 4.3. The Respondent should do one of the following: (1) accept the appellant's statement of the facts; (2) make corrections in the appellant's statement of facts; (3) clarify or point out any ambiguity in the appellant's statement of the facts; or (4) make any necessary additions to the appellant's statement of the facts. Take issue with the facts to suit your theory of the case. Be brief! DON'T ARGUE THE FACTS: ARGUE THE LAW!
- 4.4. Road map your argument. State the issues for the court to consider in clear, concise terms. BE PERSUASIVE. That is the whole object of an appellate argument. Tell the Court why you should win. "The trial court erred in finding for the Respondent because..." or "the ruling of the trial court should be upheld because..." (The word "erred" is pronounced so that it rhymes with "bird").
- 4.5. After you have "road mapped" your issues for argument, go back to point one and begin your analysis of each point/reason why you should win.

- 4.6. The Prayer! Tell the Court in one sentence what you want them to do for your client. "We respectfully request that this Court reverse/affirm the lower/trial court's decision." After your prayer, close your folder and sit down.
- 4.7. For rebuttal, do not be verbose. Only one appellant gives a rebuttal. Your rebuttal should include one or two strong points. Listen to the Respondent's argument closely to pick up on what the judges are questioning him/her about. If it favors your side, hit it hard in your rebuttal. An example might be the correction of a case that the Respondent did not analyze or apply correctly. Rebuttal is very important because it is a great way to win points, and a lawyer's favorite thing to do is to have the last word.
- 4.8. EYE CONTACT IS VERY IMPORTANT! Look directly at the judges as much as possible. This will also help you appear confident in your argument and enhance your overall advocacy style.
- 4.9. The most important thing to keep in mind is that you are very familiar with your case and you know what you are talking about. The best way to avoid feeling nervous is to prepare your argument well, think clearly and HAVE FUN!
- 4.10. You will receive feedback after both sides of the argument are completed (including rebuttal). The judges will give you helpful hints and comments that will be invaluable when you go on to the next round.

5. WHY SO MANY QUESTIONS?

- 5.1. The judges will ask you questions about the case. This will happen to EVERYONE, and the purpose is not to humiliate you or trip you up, but to see how well you know your material, how well you can think on your feet, and how well you respond and get back into the flow of your argument.
- 5.2. Anticipate what these questions might be and prepare to respond to them. Don't write out an answer to any possible questions and then just read it. That's not what the judges are looking for. Answer the question briefly and then get back into your argument. Remember, YOU control the flow of your argument as much as possible so don't open yourself up to distractions and interruptions if you can

help it by silently fumbling around trying to figure out what to say next.

6. **OUTSIDE RESEARCH:** *Outside research is NOT required.* It is entirely optional. The problem is a variation of several different decisions from multiple states, including Indiana, that are in litigation and likely headed to the United States Supreme Court. The various cases have differences in facts, and those differences in facts turn into differences in the argument. Also, as with any socio-politically charged case, you may find blogs, discussion threads, and multiple advocacy groups on both sides of the issue. *Pay attention to the quality of the resource.*