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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
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Postponement of 26th Annual CNMI High School Mock Trial Competition

Dear Competitors and Coaches,

I write to inform you that the 26th Annual CNMI High School Mock Trial Competition is postponed to March 5 to 6, 2026, and provide the information available to me at this time that led to this difficult decision.

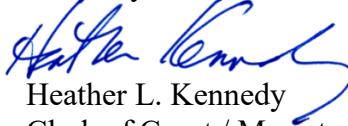
As a starting point, preparations at the U.S. District Court to host the competition on February 5 and 6, 2026, are nearly complete. The team here has been hard at work in making the United States Courthouse ready for competitors, coaches, judges, and spectators, and is finalizing logistical arrangements with vendors. As expressed at the coaches meeting, all of us here at the Court are ready to provide the students with the venue and support for them to put on their best performances next week.

However, new developments at the national level have made it impossible to keep the February competition date. As you may be aware, current law funds the federal government—including the Federal Judiciary—only through January 30, 2026. Last week, it was expected that Congress would reach an agreement on funding for the Judiciary before that date. However, events over the last few days have raised serious doubts as to whether such legislation will be enacted before January 31, 2026. Current guidance from the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts advises that if a continuing resolution or budget is not passed then the Federal Judiciary's supplemental funding will not last beyond February 4, 2026. Without funding, the Court is bound by federal law to not incur new expenses for non-essential activities. Unfortunately, the competition does not qualify as an essential activity; therefore, the Court would be unable to hold the competition on February 5 and 6 absent new funding legislation.

While there is always the possibility that funding legislation may be passed before February 5, 2026, at this juncture, postponing the competition is necessary and appropriate to give certainty to all involved in the competition. Making the decision now guarantees teams more time to prepare for the competition and make the necessary adjustments for travel and lodging at minimal additional expense. Volunteers and judges can determine whether they will be available for the new dates. And the Court can work with partners and vendors to reschedule deliveries.

I recognize that this postponement is a significant disruption to the expectations and schedules of all involved. Thank you all for your flexibility and continued commitment to the competition and the students' experience. I welcome comments by email and look forward to a fully funded U.S. District Court being able to host all of you on March 5 to 6, 2026.

Sincerely,



Heather L. Kennedy
Clerk of Court / Magistrate Judge
Mock Trial Coordinator