



# Superior Court of the State of California

## COUNTY OF STANISLAUS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Gregori High School Wins 42nd Annual Stanislaus County Mock Trial Championship**

**Modesto CA** — The Stanislaus County Office of Education (SCOE), in partnership with the Stanislaus County Superior Court, proudly announces the results of the 42nd Annual Stanislaus County Mock Trial Competition, held throughout January and culminating in the Championship Round on February 3, 2026.

This year's championship round featured an outstanding matchup between Gregori High School and Turlock High School. After a compelling and well-argued final trial, Gregori High School earned the title, taking home the Scott Steffen Championship Trophy.

The championship round was presided over by Judge Ruben Villalobos, who commended both teams for their impressive preparation, professionalism, and knowledge of the law. "Every year, these students raise the bar. Their command of the facts, the law, and courtroom advocacy reflects countless hours of preparation and true dedication. Both teams demonstrated the type of critical thinking and poise that we hope to see in the next generation of leaders. It was an honor to preside over such an exceptional championship round."

During the awards ceremony, Judge Valli Israels presented the Wray Ladine Inn of Court Spirit of Stanislaus County Mock Trial Award, recognizing outstanding sportsmanship, teamwork, and commitment to the ideals of the Mock Trial program.

The Stanislaus County Mock Trial program offers students a hands-on introduction to the American judicial system. Students argue a full criminal case — delivering opening statements, examining witnesses, making evidentiary objections, and presenting closing arguments — under the guidance of attorney and judicial volunteers. The program promotes critical thinking, public speaking, collaboration, and civic engagement.

More information can be found at <https://www.stancoe.org/about/news/article/~board/news/post/results-of-the-42nd-annual-stanislaus-county-mock-trial-competition>

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### **Acknowledging Our Volunteers**

SCOE and the Stanislaus County Superior Court extend sincere appreciation to the following judges who presided during the 2026 competition:

- Hon. Sarah Birmingham
- Hon. Saul Garcia
- Hon. Valli Israels

- Hon. Linda McFadden
- Hon. Jeff Mangar
- Hon. John Mayne
- Hon. Carrie Stephens
- Hon. Ruben Villalobos
- Hon. Robert Westbrook

Scorers included:

- Commissioner Kenneth Hara
- Commissioner Janine Highiet
- Mark Alexander, Research Attorney
- Hugh Swift, Court Executive Officer

Several judges also coached high school teams, providing invaluable mentorship:

- Judge Sonny Sandhu – Gregori High School
- Judge Valli Israels – Downey High School
- Judge Rick Distaso – Beyer High School

For further information regarding this release, please contact:

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