

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: SB 41

48th Legislature, 2ns Session, 2008

Short Title: High School Mock Trial Program

Sponsor(s): Senator Sue Wilson Beffort

Analyst: Peter van Moorsel

Date: January 20, 2008

Bill Summary:

SB 41 appropriates funds to the Board of Regents of the University of New Mexico (UNM) for the School of Law to conduct the New Mexico high school mock trial program.

Fiscal Impact:

\$30,000 is appropriated from the General Fund for FY 09. The bill contains a reversion clause.

Since FY 05, the UNM Mock Trial Program has been appropriated approximately \$287,000, including \$82,700 for FY 08.

Issues:

According to the Public Education Department (PED), the UNM Mock Trial Program is a hands-on experience for teams of high school students to develop their understanding of law and the judicial process. Students, teacher advisers, and attorney coaches spend the better part of the school year researching, studying, and preparing a hypothetical courtroom trial involving critical issues that are important and interesting to young people. The Higher Education Department reports that annually, the Mock Trial Program involves more than 200 students statewide.

Teams are made up of three witnesses and three attorneys on each side (prosecution and defense) of the case. Working with their mentors, the students use a problem provided by the Center for Civic Values— a statement of the facts , witness depositions, legal authorities and rules— to prepare opening statements, direct and cross-examinations and closing arguments. The cases are presented before judges and panels of jurors; and the teams are judged on their demonstrated knowledge and presentation skills, rather than on the legal merits of the issue at hand.

PED adds that in February, state regional competitions are held in Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe, and in March, the eight finalists meet in Albuquerque to name a state champion who will represent New Mexico at the national championship in May. In 2007 Sandia High School was awarded the state championship title, Albuquerque Academy was First Runner Up and Cibola High School in Albuquerque was Second Runner Up. According to UNM, Sandia High School finished ninth at the national competition, the highest finish ever by an APS school.

Related Bills:

None