# McGee Civil Rights Moot Court 2025 Competition

**Procedures and FAQs for Zoom Bailiffs and Volunteer Oral Argument Judges**

## General Outline of Argument

Each argument will take place in a Zoom breakout room and will be run by a volunteer bailiff who is an MHSL staff member or student. The Zoom room will open 15 minutes prior to the scheduled round. As judges and student advocates arrive, the bailiff will invite judges to a named and numbered breakout room. Judges will move into the breakout room by clicking in the toolbar on Breakout Rooms and then clicking “join breakout (named) room.”

Prior to the argument: Judges will gather in a judges-only breakout room. While in the judges’ breakout room, please decide which judge will preside. In addition, we recommend that you agree to allow each advocate 2 minutes of uninterrupted time before you begin asking questions. Students have been informed of this recommendation. Please decide if your panel will follow the 2-minute recommendation and discuss any process you wish to follow in asking questions. For example, your panel might agree to rotate questions to account for the somewhat stilted nature of Zoom arguments.

The Zoom Bailiff will join judges in the breakout room once all advocates are in the courtroom. The Bailiff will be able to answer technical questions, and the Bailiff will provide you with the order in which each advocate will present. The Bailiff will then leave the breakout room and invite you back to your courtroom. Once there, a five-minute conflict check will take place.

Arguments

Each team is allotted 30 minutes for argument. Team members split the 30 minutes between them, though no team member may argue more than 20 of the 30 minutes.

Timekeeping will be handled by the Zoom Bailiff. Five-two-one and stop cards will be held up by bailiffs at the end of the arguments.

**Following the arguments**: The Zoom Bailiff will invite the judges back to the judges’ breakout room. In the breakout room, you can finalize your scores. You are welcome to discuss the arguments with your fellow volunteers, but each judge must report her or his own scores to the Zoom Bailiff. The Zoom Bailiff will join the judges’ breakout room to record your scores (see below for more detail on scoring) and transmit those scores to our (virtual) tabulation room.

**Critique:** After the Zoom Bailiff transmits your courtroom’s scores to the tabulation room, the Bailiff will invite you back to your courtroom to provide critique to the student advocates. Strive to balance your comments so that each individual advocate and each team receives some constructive suggestions. Keep in mind that competitors take what you say to heart, and nuance is tricky on Zoom. Aim to keep your critique to 15 minutes overall, or 5 minutes per judge. **Do not announce individual or team scores**. Brief scores are part of teams’ overall scores in all but the final round, and so, a team who receives the highest oral argument score may not win the round.

**Releasing the room**: Please do not leave the virtual meeting until your Zoom Bailiff has confirmation that the tabulation room has received your scores, and all is in order. The Zoom Bailiff or the presiding judge will announce the winner of the round (which will include brief scores). Following that announcement and any remaining critique, you are free to leave the courtroom.

## Scoring

Each judge will score each advocate on a scale of 1-50.

The recommended point range is: Excellent: 45-50 points; Good: 40-44 points; Average 35-39 points; Below average: 34 or below.

A sample scoresheet is on the judges’ website. You may wish to print out a copy or two of the sample score sheet to take notes during the argument.

Following the argument, you will return to the judges’ breakout room with the Zoom Bailiff. The Bailiff will record your scores using the “Share Screen” function. After your verbal approval, the Zoom Bailiff will transmit the score sheet via email to the tabulation room. The Zoom Bailiff will transmit all panelists’ scores in one email transmission.

The tabulation room will double-check scores and will calculate the winner of the round. The tabulation room will let the Zoom Bailiff know which team prevailed. Because brief scores are calculated into overall round scores, the team that had the higher oral argument scores might not win the round.

## Zoom Etiquette Requests

Judges: Please keep your cameras on for duration of the argument unless the Zoom Bailiff requests cameras be turned off to solve a technical problem. Consider muting your microphone when you are not speaking.

Please ensure your screen name appears as “Judge [Last Name].” Your Zoom Bailiff can help you change your screen name before the round begins and can help change your name back following the round. We have asked student competitors to follow the screen name format, “Mr./Ms./Miss/Mrs./Mx. First Name Last Name.”

Please take particular care not to talk over each other. Zoom will transmit only one speaker at a time. If your panel has agreed to rotate questions or a similar arrangement, please do your best to follow that agreement throughout the argument.

Please do not use the Chat Function as that can be distracting to competitors.

## Supplemental information for bailiffs

Prior to the round, get information from both teams on order of arguments and time allotment. Share the argument order with the judges before the round begins. Use that information to complete the timekeeping sheet (below).

Each team has 30 minutes total for argument. Students can divide time however they would like except each student must argue at least 10 minutes. Petitioner/Appellant may reserve up to 5 minutes for rebuttal.

Do not stop time when questions are asked. In rare instances, the presiding judge might ask you to stop the time. This might happen if there if the judges need to confer among themselves.

This timesheet is for your convenience. You do not need to retain it once the argument is finished.

 When it is time for the round to begin, you will invite judges back to the main meeting room and arguments will commence.

Announce the case: You get to say, **“Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye, the State of McGee Supreme Court is now in session. All persons having business before this honorable court are admonished to draw near and give their attention, for the Court is now sitting. God save the United States and this Honorable Court!"**

After you say this, the presiding judge will take over.

We recommend using your cell phone to count down the time each advocate has reserved. For example, if advocate 1 has reserved 14 minutes, set your cell phone timer for 14 minutes. Hold cards up in Zoom screen for 5-2-1 minutes and STOP. When time has expired, you unmute and say, “**Time has expired**.” (It is okay to interrupt the student.) The presiding judge may give the student a few more seconds to finish a thought.

An optional timekeeping form is provided on the next page.

## Optional timekeeping form

|  |
| --- |
| *Sample Timekeeping Sheet* |
| Petitioner/Appellant*Insert Team*  |
|  | **TIME REQUESTED** | **NOTES** |
| Advocate 1:  |  |  |
| Advocate 2:  |  |  |
| Respondent/Appellee *Insert Team* ***G*** |
| Advocate 1: |  |  |
| Advocate 2:  |  |  |
| *Petitioner/Appellant Rebuttal* |
| Rebuttal:  |  |  |

We suggest printing a copy of this sample timekeeping sheet before the round. You can also reproduce the table with pen and paper.

## Procedure in Case of Judge Technical Problem

In the event of a technical problem for a panel judge, a team’s allotted time will stop running. The Zoom Bailiff will start a three-minute timer for the judge to rejoin the meeting. If the judge is unable to rejoin the meeting within three minutes, the other judges will finish the argument. In the event the judge rejoins the meeting after the three-minute time expires, that judge may still consider the argument and vote on the result, provided that the judge was able to view a substantial portion of the argument, as determined by the panel as a whole and the competition administration, if necessary. (Rule 10.06, subd. 2)

## Procedure in Case of Team Member Technical Problem

In the event of a technical problem for a team member, a team’s allotted time will stop running. The Bailiff will start a three-minute timer for the team member to rejoin the meeting. If the competitor is unable to rejoin the meeting within three minutes, the other team member (or the non-arguing team member in the event of a three-person team) may finish the argument. (Rule 10.06, subd. 2)

## Procedure in Case of Multiple Technical Problems

In the event of a technical problem with the online platform for more than one competitor or panel judge, the round timer will stop, and the Bailiff will set a ten-minute timer for the parties to rejoin the meeting. If the parties are not able to rejoin the meeting within that time, the round will be rescheduled, under direction from the competition administrators. Any rescheduled round may occur with fewer than three judges and may be judged by competition administrators and/or team coaches, properly screened for conflicts. (Rule 10.06, subd 3).

We do not anticipate this level of technical problem. In the unlikely event a round must be rescheduled, we welcome, but do not expect the originally scheduled volunteers to participate in the rescheduled round.

## FAQ

**Q: Where do I find my Zoom link for the round?**

A: You have received a calendar invite that includes the link. It is also on the Judge’s website. Finally, you get a reminder email the day before your scheduled argument.

**Q: What happens if there is a technology glitch?**

A: We likely will be able to fix most mishaps within a few minutes thanks to our tech team. In the unlikely event we cannot solve the technical problem, the rules permit the Competition Committee to reschedule the round. If that happens, we welcome, but do not expect the originally scheduled volunteers to participate in the rescheduled round.

**Q: Can I get help with Zoom or other tech advice in advance of the competition?**

A: Yes. Debbie Nelson debra.nelson@mitchellhamline.edu.

**Q: Who will be in the Zoom courtrooms?**

A: In addition to the panel of three volunteer judges, between four and six competitors will be in each room. Observers might include coaches of the teams that are competing.

**Q: Who announces the winning team?**

A: The Zoom Bailiff will receive an email from the tabulation room once a winner has been determined for your courtroom. The Zoom Bailiff will inform the presiding judge through the chat function. The presiding judge may announce the winner.

**Q: The team that performed better during oral argument did not win the round. How did that happen?**

A: Teams’ brief scores are calculated into the teams’ overall score for each round. You can think of the brief as a fourth judge in the room. It is not uncommon for the stronger oral team to lose the round once brief scores have been calculated.

**Q: Will the rounds be recorded?**

A: Only the Saturday rounds will be recorded.