UPDATE 9/20/2021: Dear Coaches and Mock Trial Participants,

Last week, the MTEC had a call with our district and regional coordinators. We all agreed that in-person mock trial in Pennsylvania remains the goal for this year, but we also collectively identified many challenges to getting there, including most importantly the possibility that some local courthouses may not be willing to accommodate trials this year and some school districts may not permit travel for competition. District and regional coordinators are investigating these issues, and we intend to survey them in a week or two to determine how many districts or regions could administer a normal competition this year, assuming no change in the COVID situation.

Throughout the history of Pennsylvania mock trial, we have tried to assure near-uniform rules of competition and competition formats, so students competed on similar playing fields in the district, regional, and state competition. It is unrealistic to expect that there will be no issues with in-person mock trial anywhere in the state this year, whether because of conditions today or the conditions that can reasonably be expected to develop locally over time. But if there must be virtual trials in some parts of the state, the principle of uniformity would demand that we have virtual trials everywhere. In other words, our primary goals - uniformity and holding in-person trials - are in acute tension. Likewise, we are aware that certain schools, school districts, or courts may only allow competition to occur under conditions we have not historically been forced to administer, such as by requiring participants or spectators to be vaccinated and/or masked. These questions have proved controversial in society, and we have to consider how the MTEC could enforce any such conditions placed on us. We are not alone in facing this conundrum, and states nationwide are addressing it in very different ways.

In order to give us time to consider our options and collect information about what our coordinators, coaches, and participants thinks we should do, we will be moving the registration date back from November 5 to November 19. Please keep an eye out for our survey in early October and complete it promptly, after you have had a chance to discuss the questions we ask with all appropriate stakeholders.