

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- A distinguished panel that includes two federal judges will preside over the Indiana University Maurer School of Law's 2008-09 Sherman Minton Moot Court Competition finals on Friday, March 6 at 7 p.m.

This year's panel includes Judge Michael Kanne of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, JD '68; Judge Timothy Dyk of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit; Indiana Court of Appeals Judge Patricia Riley; Indiana Solicitor General Tom Fisher, JD '94; and attorney Greg Castanias, JD '90, a partner at Jones Day in Washington, DC.

The competition, which allows students to make appellate arguments in a realistic setting, began in the fall semester and will conclude Friday night when the winners are announced.

Competitors will present arguments in a fictional but realistic case where a same-sex couple sued a pharmacy for refusing to dispense fertility drugs. The pharmacists contended that their First Amendment rights allowed them to refuse to dispense fertility drugs to unmarried couples. The plaintiffs argued that the true reason they weren't given the medication was because they are a same-sex couple.

Complicating matters, an anonymous author on an Internet message board claimed to have knowledge supporting the plaintiffs' beliefs. The plaintiffs sued the Internet service provider that hosted the message board, seeking to reveal the identity of the person who posted the message.

Professor Seth Lahn, the competition's faculty advisor, said the case presents two interesting legal questions: whether health care workers can deny treatment to someone based on religious objections, and whether the identity of the author of an anonymous Internet message board may be revealed to provide information in the case.

"We are especially pleased with the topicality of this year's issues -- Internet anonymity and the role of religious objections by health care workers to deny certain types of services -- which have both been the topic of news stories this past week," Lahn said.

The Sherman Minton Moot Court Competition is an elimination-style tournament, with a limited number of students advancing to each successive round.

Second- and third-year students find the experience highly valuable, said Moot Court Executive Board Chief Justice Larry Hagerman. "With nearly 150 competitors and more than 175 volunteer judges, the competition is not only the School's largest student program, but it is also our largest alumni program," Hagerman, a third-year student, said. "Students get a chance to practice and improve their written and oral advocacy skills while also having the opportunity to meet and interact with many of Indiana Law's most engaged and supportive alumni. It is truly an invaluable experience from which every law student, regardless of his or her field of interest, can benefit."

Quarterfinal rounds were held earlier this week, and the semifinal round will take place on Wednesday, March 4, at 6 p.m. The public is invited to attend all rounds, which are held in the Moot Court Room at the Maurer School of Law. A public reception will be held following the final arguments.

Media Contacts

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Related Links

- CNN article on morality in health care
[<http://www.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/02/27/conscience.rollback/index.html>]

- The Huffington Post on Internet anonymity
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/02/28/court-uphelds-anonymity-o_n_170808.html]

Web Version

- <http://info.law.indiana.edu/news/page/normal/10155.html>

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