

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

contact: Marcia McBrien | (517) 373-0129

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REAL-LIFE DRUG CASE IS FOCUS OF HIGH SCHOOL MOCK COURT AT MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT LEARNING CENTER THIS WEEK

Students to play roles of justices, attorneys, and Supreme Court staff in case based on actual prosecution; defendant's marijuana plants were discovered during firefighters' investigation, but he asserts Fourth Amendment rights

LANSING, MI, June 21, 2011 – A real-life drug prosecution – and the 4th Amendment's ban on unreasonable searches and seizures – will be the focus of a mock [Michigan Supreme Court](#) session enacted by high school students at the Michigan Hall of Justice this week.

The 23 students will play various roles, including Supreme Court justices and attorneys, in studying *People v Slaughter*, an actual case now pending before the Michigan Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments in the case in January. Like actual Michigan Supreme Court hearings, the mock Supreme Court session, which takes place on Friday, June 24 at 11 a.m., is open to the public.

Learning Center Coordinator Rachael Drenovsky said she chose a real case to help students appreciate “how real-life problems and events present legal issues. We don't often appreciate just how important a role the law has in our lives.”

In *Slaughter*, the defendant asserts that his Fourth Amendment rights were violated when a firefighter discovered marijuana plants in his apartment. Firefighters were responding to a complaint from the defendant's neighbor in the adjoining apartment, who had discovered water running between her wall and his. After knocking at the defendant's door and receiving no response, firefighters entered his apartment through an open window. A firefighter who went to the defendant's basement to turn off the water found the marijuana plants and later informed the police. The trial court, affirmed by a 2-1 vote of the Michigan Court of Appeals, dismissed the charges, concluding that the evidence of the marijuana plants must be suppressed under the Fourth Amendment. The dissenting Court of Appeals judge would have held that the evidence was admissible under the “community caretaker” doctrine. Evidence discovered by police officers while performing “caretaking” functions, such as aiding people in distress, is often admissible under the community caretaker doctrine, despite the lack of a search warrant.

The mock court session is part of “Exploring Careers in the Law,” offered by the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center each summer. A separate program for middle school students will be offered in July; openings are still available. For more information, contact Ms. Drenovsky at (517) 373-5027 or see <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/plc/resources/programs.htm>.

Instructors for the high school program include Supreme Court Justice Mary Beth Kelly, Supreme Court and State Court Administrative Office staff, and other legal professionals. Also assisting are Michigan State University law school students, who will help the high school students prepare the case. Sessions take place from 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. in the Michigan Hall of Justice, located at 925 West Ottawa Street, Lansing.

-- MSC --