

## The Verdict Is In, Says Congressman Rothman: New Jersey, Teaneck Kids Are Big Winners In National Mo

For Immediate Release

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The Verdict Is In, Says Congressman Rothman: New Jersey, Teaneck Kids Are Big Winners In National Mock Trial Controversy

-- Rothman, NJS Bar Foundation Secure Right of NJ Champion Torah Academy Team to Participate Fully in National Mock Trial Tournament --

(TEANECK, NJ) - Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) today announced the successful resolution to the controversy over the refusal of the National High School Mock Trial Championship to allow for the full participation of the team from Torah Academy of Bergen County (TABC), the New Jersey State champs. After intensive lobbying by Representative Rothman, the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, and officials and students from the Teaneck-based Orthodox Jewish yeshiva, the Board of Directors of the National High School Mock Trial Championship (NHSMTC) relented following its lengthy emergency conference call this afternoon. The Board agreed to rearrange the schedule of the tournament to allow the TABC team to participate fully without being forced to violate its members' religious beliefs, which include observance of the Sabbath on Saturdays. The five-round competition will take place in Charlotte, North Carolina and is now slated to begin on Thursday, May 5th and continue throughout the course of the weekend.

"I applaud the NHSTMC Board of Directors for demonstrating flexibility and sensitivity to the rights of religious minorities by rescheduling some of the rounds of the tournament to accommodate New Jersey's High School Mock Trial champions, the Torah Academy of Bergen County team," said Congressman Rothman, a strong advocate in the United States Congress for religious freedom and civil liberties. "No academic tournament - particularly one founded, organized,

and underwritten by lawyers, judges, and state bar associations from all over the nation - should require contestants to violate their deeply held religious beliefs in order to compete on an even playing field," said Representative Rothman, a former practicing attorney who also served as the Bergen County Surrogate Court Judge. "This is fundamentally a question of equal access and the right of religious minorities to participate in a competition open to students from every walk of American life," said Congressman Rothman.

The NHSMTC emergency conference call this afternoon occurred as a result of a three-hour meeting convened last night by Congressman Rothman and the NJS Bar Foundation with members of the NHSMTC's Board of Directors in New Brunswick. The TABC team will now be allowed to compete on Thursday night, May 5th, during the day on Friday, May 6th, and - should it reach the final rounds - following sundown on Saturday, May 7th or on the morning of Sunday, May 8th.