**Pat Justice V. CAT News et al.   
2017 Judge’s Case Summary**

In the 2017 case, Pat Justice v. CAT News et al., students will consider a case of defamation of a public official by a news station. Pat Justice recently ran for re-election as Governor of the State of Ohio. During the campaign, Trillium High school’s *We the People* club invited Governor Justice to speak during the lunch hour. Afterward, the Governor met with a student in the principal’s office. Principal I.M Veritas was a rival of Governor Justice in college, and once the two were alone, an argument began which ended with the Governor storming out. As the Governor left, Principal Veritas suffered a fatal brain aneurysm and died. A student reporter heard the argument and reported to a local news affiliate CAT News that the Governor had killed the principal. While it was disproven quickly, the story went viral. Governor Justice lost the election, and has now filed a civil suit against CAT News, alleging defamation. The former Governor will seek to prove that the station published the story with reckless disregard to the truth, and that the story damaged his/her reputation and cost him/her the election.

Plaintiff

Governor Pat Justice is the Plaintiff in this case, and is suing CAT News, alleging defamation. The Governor must prove with clear and convincing evidence that the station is liable for defamation.   
  
Plaintiff’s Key Arguments:

CAT News is liable for defamation for three reasons:

* The story was false.
* The story was published with reckless disregard to the truth (actual malice)
* The story was the proximate cause of the loss in the gubernatorial election.

Plaintiff’s Witnesses (2 of these 3 will be called):

**Governor Pat Justice** – Governor Pat Justice is the plaintiff in this case. The Governor will speak about a long career in public service, and will provide background about the history of the relationship with Principal. Veritas. Governor Justice will provide an account of what happened on the day in question, and explain how the reporting by CAT News impacted the outcome of the election and their political career generally.

**Mickey Harris** - Mickey Harris is the school secretary at Trillium high school, and discovered the body of Principal Veritas. Harris will provide an account of what transpired on the day of the assembly, from their point of view, and the immediate aftermath of discovering Veritas. Harris will also testify to the impact of the news story, which was so compelling that they doubted even their own knowledge of the incident.

**Dr. Sam Jackson** - Dr. Sam Jackson is a professor at Buckeye State University and a polling expert with more than twenty years of experience. Dr. Jackson will report that, based on indicators such as approval ratings, stance on popular issues, and Justice running as an incumbent, the Governor was favored to win the election. Dr. Jackson will also report that because the CAT News story aired so close to election day, it had a particularly negative impact on the Governor’s image and ultimately cost Justice the election.

Defense

The Defense in this case, CAT News will provide arguments that they should not be found liable for defamation. If they are unable to, they will be responsible for damages determined at a later hearing.

Defense’s Key Arguments:

CAT News will claim the following:

* The statements represent constitutionally-protected statements of “opinion,” not “fact.”
* The statements were presented without malice.
* The story cannot be seen as the proximate cause of the electoral loss.

Defense Witnesses (2 of these 3 will be called):

**Andersen “Andy” Rather -** Andersen “Andy” Rather is a senior at Trillium High School, and an intern at CAT News. Andy will testify to about their own journalism background, and the intern program and training at CAT News. Andy will testify to witnessing a heated exchange between Principal Veritas and Governor Justice, and to seeing Governor Justice flee the scene immediately before the Principal was found dead. Andy will also describe the tweets posted to the CAT News twitter feed, the on camera interview in which Governor Justice’s involvement was discussed.

**Cameron Carter -** Cameron Carter is a news executive with CAT News, and will testify to the integrity and standards of CAT News. Carter will discuss the training procedures in place to prevent false statements from being reported by the station, the circumstances surrounding the story on Governor Justice’s involvement, and will speak about attempts to retract the story.

**Reese Murphy** - Reese Murphy is a statistical analyst for the Buckeye News Network, and host of a television show about polling trends and politics. Murphy will testify that the polling results fell within the margin of error during the campaign cycle, indicating that there is no definitive statistical proof that Governor Justice was ahead in the polls before the incident.