

2024 (NOF) Oak Invitational
Mock Trial
Fact Pattern:
State V. Kennedy Martin

On September 22, 2023, in the small town of Willow Creek, a parade rallying for the leading mayoral candidate, Francis Fernandez, was taking place. At 1 PM, Candidate Fernandez rode down the crowded streets on a float. The parade's atmosphere turned from cheerful to pure chaos as open gunshots rang out through the streets.

No civilians were harmed during the shooting. However, Candidate Fernandez was shot in the chest and pronounced dead at the scene by medics. The shooter wasn't caught. Local law enforcement quickly suspected Kennedy Martin, the only other mayoral candidate, as the perpetrator. It is undisputed that Martin was behind in votes at the time of the crime. With two weeks left in the election, law enforcement believed Candidate Martin had a clear motive to commit the crime.

On September 24, 2023, Sheriff Khan obtained evidence—Exhibit 1, a gun found in Kennedy Martin's home. Investigators believe this is the gun she used to kill Francis Fernandez. Exhibit 2 is a letter written by Kennedy Martin and sent to Fernandez two weeks before the crime. These exhibits were lawfully obtained. This evidence was sufficient for Kennedy Martin's arrest. Despite this evidence, Martin asserts she had nothing to do with the murder, claiming Sheriff Khan had it out for her.

The state charged Kennedy Martin with first-degree murder. Kennedy Martin has entered a plea of not guilty. The defense contends the state's investigation was selective and incomplete, failing to pursue all relevant leads. The defense asserts the state's evidence isn't sufficient to prove Martin's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

1. Prosecution - Will Power, Forensic Ballistics Expert

“I’m Will Power, and I’m an expert in forensic ballistics. My job was to investigate what type of gun killed Francis Fernandez. After my investigation, I concluded that the bullet came from a Smith & Wesson model XD .45 caliber. Exhibit 2 is a photograph of the defendant’s gun, which happens to be a Smith & Wesson model XD .45 caliber. This gun model is readily available on the Willow Creek gun market. In my expert opinion, the defendant merely owning this gun doesn’t raise a red flag.”

2. Prosecution - Arjun Khan, Sheriff

“I’m Arjun Khan, Chief Sheriff of Willow Creek. As soon as the crime took place, my investigation honed in on defendant Kennedy Martin. Everything pointed to Martin; hence I’ve only spent time investigating her. The crime took place two weeks before the mayoral election results were announced. Martin had a clear motive to kill her rival candidate. In Exhibit 2, she makes her plan clear in the written threat I found in Candidate Fernandez’s home. In my search of Kennedy’s home, I found the very gun that fired the type of bullet that killed Fernandez—Exhibit 1.”

3. Witness Statement - Ethel Sykeh, Kennedy Martin’s Assistant

“I’m Ethel Sykeh. I work as Ms. Martin’s assistant. On September 22, 2023, Ms. Martin spent the majority of the day working with me; however, around noon, Ms. Martin sent me halfway across town to pick up lunch for her. When I arrived back at the office, she appeared to be in the same place as when I left.”

4. Private Investigator - Grace Rojas

“I’m Detective Rojas. I was retained by the defense to conduct an independent investigation on their behalf. If all goes well in this case, I will be promoted to senior investigator within my agency. My investigation led me to believe that Sheriff Khan exhibited confirmation bias, primarily focusing on Martin and failing to investigate alternative suspects.”

EXHIBIT

1



Francis,

Sep 12, 2023

As of right now,
you might be the leading
candidate, but I will do
everything in my power
to stop you from becoming
mayor. You're a master
manipulator, and while you
have this city fooled, I'm
not buying your act, buddy.
Your policies will only
hurt my city and my
people. Here's some advice:

Stop while you're ahead. Stop
now. Because I won't stop
until I am the mayor.

—Kennedy Martin