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PRESS RELEASE

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DISTRICT ATTORNEYS MAINTAIN FOCUS ON ETHICS

New Training Details Proper And Improper Closing Arguments

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference’s Justice and Professionalism Committee has released the third installment in its ongoing series of training materials for Tennessee prosecutors.

“Points To Consider: Avoiding Improper Closing Argument” is the latest video-based training tool that’s been distributed to Tennessee’s District Attorneys and their staffs. This latest training tool offers guidelines on what constitutes improper closing argument and defines various categories of improper arguments by sharing relevant appellate case scenarios and decisions.

“An improper closing argument can undo months or even years of investigative progress in the pursuit of justice,” said Mike Dunavant, District Attorney for the 25th Judicial District. “This training reinforces our efforts to make sure that all cases in the 25th Judicial District are handled ethically and effectively from top to bottom.”

While all attorneys have a duty to advocate zealously on behalf of their clients, District Attorneys have a higher duty to seek justice, to protect the rights of all citizens, including victims, witnesses, and the defendant. Both new and veteran prosecutors strive to ensure their earnest and vigorous closing arguments avoid improper methods.

The “Avoiding Improper Closing Argument” training tool also provides prosecutors with tips and examples of arguments that have been determined by the appellate courts to be appropriate and proper, and discusses the impact an improper closing argument may have on appeal.

“It’s important for prosecutors to continue to develop effective, yet practical ways to improve the justice system, and this training series has been valuable in achieving that goal,” said Mike Dunavant, Conference President and Chairman of the Justice and Professionalism Committee.

Since 2013, the committee has developed “best practices” training tools for Tennessee’s District Attorneys and Assistant District Attorneys to ensure legal and ethical compliance.

Tennessee is one of the first states in the nation to formalize such a training effort. The TNDAGC’s Justice and Professionalism Committee has received awards for its efforts and has been invited to share its work with other prosecutors from around the country at the Department of Justice headquarters in Washington, D.C.

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The Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference coordinates prosecutorial efforts of the District Attorneys General and seeks more prompt and efficient administration of justice. It is composed of the District Attorneys General from the state’s 31 judicial districts who are responsible for the prosecution of criminal cases on behalf of the state. For more information about Tennessee District Attorneys, visit www.tndaqc.org.