



## News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge  
19th Judicial Circuit  
Lake County  
Waukegan, Illinois 60085-4359

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Waukegan, Illinois

### 17<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MOCK TRIAL INVITATIONAL HELD VIA ZOOM

For the past 16 years, the hallways and courtrooms of the Lake County Courthouse came alive on the Annual Mock Trial Invitational day, however due to COVID mitigation measures, Saturday morning looked very different for the Judges, volunteers, coaches, and students as the competition transitioned into Lake County's first-ever remote Mock Trial Invitational.

Like attorneys, defendants, and litigants with active cases at the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit, Zoom IDs and passwords were issued to teachers and students to allow them the ability to participate from the comforts of their own homes. Livestreaming links were also provided to non-participants to observe the competition. And rather than an in-person welcome from Chief Judge Diane Winter, and event chairs Circuit Judge Christen Bishop, Circuit Judge Victoria Rossetti, and Associate Judge Stephen DeRue, the participants heard directly from the Judge presiding over their case.

The twenty-eight high school teams competing against one another included students from Bartlett High School, Carmel Catholic High School, Chicago Christian High School, College Preparatory School of America, De La Salle Institute, Dunlap High School, Evanston Township High School, Glenbard East High School, Highland Park High School, Hinsdale South High School, Homewood-Flossmoor High School, Libertyville High School, Maine South High School, Maine West High School, Mundelein High School, Niles West High School, Normal Community West High School, South Elgin High School, Southland College Prep High School, St. Charles East High School, St. Charles North High School (2 teams), Stevenson High School, Thornton Township High School, Timothy Christian School, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools Whitney M. Young Magnet High School, and York Community High School.

By 8:45 a.m., the students were logged on to their assigned courtrooms to begin their virtual trials. The mock trial, selected by the Illinois State Bar Association was entitled, "People of the State of Illinois v. Jordan Markson." The case involved the offense of drug-induced homicide, in that the said defendant unlawfully, and without legal justification, caused the death of another subject by knowingly delivering a substance containing a controlled substance, in which death was caused by the ingestion of that controlled substance.

The teams tried the case, with the students performing in the roles of attorneys and witnesses. Lake County Judges Luis Berrones, Michael Betar, Rhonda Bruno, Stephen DeRue, Ari Fisz, Patricia Fix, Bolling Haxall, Charles Johnson, Christopher Kennedy, Reginald Mathews, Jacqueline Melius, Veronica O'Malley, James Simonian, and George Strickland presided over the trials. While this year there was only one trial for each team, no scoring, and no awards, teams were required to practice, work together, and collaborate before presenting their case over the Zoom platform. Assistant State's Attorneys, Assistant Public Defenders, and practicing trial attorneys volunteered to evaluate the students on their ability, presentation, and effectiveness with constructive feedback to help the students and coaches prepare for the State competition that is being held virtually in mid-March.

Nearly a year ago, the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by not pausing or delaying court operations, but by relying on our Judicial Information Support (JIS) team to transition Lake County into a virtual court platform for hearings and trials. Lake County successfully held Illinois' first-ever remote jury trial in mid-February. It is not without the training, support, and technology provided by JIS that the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit has been able to continue to provide access to justice and essential court services in Lake County; JIS was a key driving force behind this successful virtual Invitational.

“Thank you to everyone for their participation in our 17th Annual Mock Trial Invitational. Judge Victoria Rossetti and I brought this event to Lake County in 2004. Each year, with the support of the Law-Related Education Initiative, the Lake County Bar Association, the Lake County Bar Foundation, the Lake County Juvenile Officers Association, and the Judges and staff of the Nineteenth Judicial Circuit our program continues to grow. While we would have loved to have held our traditional program, understanding the health and safety of all involved, hosting our Invitational virtually for the first time was the best option. We continue to be impressed with the teams that are presenting, especially with their ability to shift into a fully remote platform and wish them the best of luck as they prepare for the upcoming State competition. We look forward to resuming our competition in-person in 2022,” said Circuit Judge Christen Bishop.

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