

The 2021 Mock Court Program

The Society's Sixteenth Annual Mock Court Program went forward on schedule this year. Covid restrictions meant that the Program had to be held virtually, which required unprecedented coordination among court staff, participating schools, teachers, students and attorney mentors. "It was challenging, to be sure," said Jim Rocap, who chaired the event this year, "but it was amazing to see the can-do attitude of all of the participants." Chambers staff for eleven judges – Chief Judge Srinivasan, Judges Tatel, Millett and Rao of the Court of Appeals, Judges Boasberg, Jackson, Contreras, Moss, Mehta, and Magistrate Judges Harvey and Faruqui of the District Court – conducted 11 simultaneous zoom courtroom sessions. 115 students from five different schools participated, including School Without Walls, Maret School, H.D. Woodson High School, Washington Latin Charter School, and Georgetown Day School. Students were mentored in advance by 29 volunteer attorneys in multiple pre-Program virtual sessions. Each student then presented a five-minute argument to a judge on one of two fact patterns presenting First Amendment and Fourth Amendment issues in a school setting. The Judges were active questioners, engaging the students on the issues.

Following the arguments, the Judges were able to spend time with their "classes" discussing the issues, the judicial process and career paths, among other things. Each Judge selected an outstanding advocate (in some cases two) from his/her group. They included: Emily Noll, Emil Massad, and Allison Kaplan (Maret); Elle Waters, Jada George, Michela Irving, and Cooper Davenport (Washington Latin); Jamal Thompson (H.D. Woodson); Jonah Shesol, Julie Steele, Jaime Kleinbord, and Hayden Martz (Georgetown Day); and Isabelle Shook, and Olivia Pierre (School Without Walls).

"It is a unique program that is remarkable for the care and interest that the teachers, students, mentors and Judges bring to it," said Steve Pollak, Society Board Chair, "and the Society is proud to have been able to present it each year for the past 16 years."