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Chicago Debate Commission

Empowering the Voice of Urban Youth

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For Immediate Release

Locke Lord Attorneys to Judge Chicago Debate League Varsity Season Opener Tournament on Saturday, Oct. 1

September 28, 2011 – An estimated 65 varsity debate students from 16 Chicago public high schools will put their skills to the test and get a dose of life in a large law firm setting Saturday, October 1, during the Chicago Debate League’s “A” Conference Varsity Season Opener at Locke Lord’s Chicago Office, 111 South Wacker Drive.

The daylong tournament will include a panel discussion on the connections between urban debate and the legal profession. The high school competitors will showcase their debate skills before 20 volunteer judges, all attorneys with the Chicago Office of Locke Lord LLP who went through special training to judge this event. The tournament is an opportunity for urban public school students to debate in a corporate setting and to connect with professionals willing to mentor them on debate and presentation skills as well as career choices.

“Debate and the power of effective and persuasive communication are at the heart of just about any career choice today,” said Jennifer Kenedy, Managing Partner of Locke Lord’s Chicago Office and a volunteer judge. “Our attorneys enthusiastically volunteered their time to judge this competition and look forward to this chance to work with Chicago Public School students to help them develop their oral advocacy skills and learn more about the role of debate in the legal profession. Debate is a highly competitive sport and is not exclusive to private schools – and, like any other varsity sport, it provides its participants with important skills which will benefit them for a lifetime.”

“Corporate and law firm sponsors like Locke Lord give us the resources and support we need to really make a difference in the lives of these inner-city students,” said Pat Hughes, Chicago Debate Commission Board Chair. “These debate tournaments take a lot of sweat equity to be successful, but the long-term impact they have on these young competitors is well worth the time and effort. Just look at some of the stories of our Chicago Debate League alumni and you’ll see the potential.”(<http://www.chicagodebateleague.org/blog/photosvideos/previous-chronicles/>) The Chicago Debate League is run by a partnership between the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Debate Commission, a nonprofit organization.

Participating in the Chicago Debate League has been shown to improve public school students’ academic achievement and college readiness. A study of the first 10 years of the Chicago Debate League found that debaters improved their grades, had a much higher graduation rate and were better prepared for college than non-debaters based on ACT standards. CDL debaters spend on average 410 hours outside of the classroom researching, writing and debating the national high school debate topic.

The “A” Conference Varsity tournament is one of four Chicago Debate League events set for Oct. 1 at venues around the city. Altogether, more than 500 students from Chicago public high schools are expected to compete.

The Chicago Debate League is the premier competitive academic Urban Debate League in the nation. Comprising 59 high schools and 22 middle schools from across the city of Chicago, it is the nation’s largest and most competitively successful Urban Debate League.

Locke Lord LLP consistently ranks among *American Lawyer’s* top 100 U.S. law firms. Our 30-plus practice areas serve national and international clients from offices in Atlanta, Austin, Chicago, Dallas, Hong Kong, Houston, London, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, Sacramento, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. We have built a solid reputation in complex litigation, regulatory and transactional work, and our nearly 650 attorneys build collaborative relationships and craft creative solutions – all designed and executed to meet clients’ long-term strategic goals. At the end of each year, we want our Firm to be better, stronger and more highly regarded than it was at the beginning.

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