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Philosopher Socrates found “not guilty” by audience of 500 in mock trial presented by the National Hellenic Museum

Successful defense led by Robert A. Clifford and Sarah King (Clifford Law Offices) and Dan K. Webb (Winston & Strawn)

CHICAGO (May 24, 2023)—An audience of over 500 jurors found Socrates “not guilty” Monday night as the **National Hellenic Museum’s Trial of Socrates** revisited ancient history at Chicago’s Harris Theater. Two thousand five hundred years after his original conviction for corrupting the youth of Athens and impiety, Socrates and his defense team faced his prosecutors before a panel of four judges and 13 jurors, who reached differing conclusions as to his guilt and innocence. But when the votes of the audience were poured onto the scales of justice, Socrates was exonerated.

The mock trial May 22 featured compelling and engaging testimony from Socrates himself, played by Second City alum **John Kapelos** (*The Shape of Water*, *The Umbrella Academy*, *The Breakfast Club*), and a successful defense led by attorneys **Robert A. Clifford** (Clifford Law Offices), **Dan K. Webb** (Winston & Strawn) and **Sarah King** (Clifford Law Offices). The People’s case against Socrates was presented by attorneys **Patrick Collins** (King & Spalding), **Tinos Diamantatos** (Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP) and **Julie Porter** (Salvatore Prescott Porter & Porter, PLLC). The event was emceed by award-winning TV and radio personality **Andrea Darlas**.

As in ancient Greece, the audience became the jurors who decided Socrates’ fate at the end of the trial, placing a white chip in a bag for innocence and a blue chip for guilt. The chips were collected at the end of the night and then placed on the scales of justice, where the outcome was overwhelmingly “not guilty.” Unlike the outcome of the original trial in Athens in 399 BCE, where Socrates was found guilty and put to death at the age of 70, this time Socrates was free to go and to continue to speak publicly, promoting free thought and questioning the imperfections of democracy.

In a convincing closing argument to the audience and a panel of esteemed jurors on stage—comprised of civic leaders and media personalities—defense counsel **Robert A. Clifford** told the group he grew up on “the south side of Athens,” and continued, “Socrates did not disrespect the gods. He engaged in a purposeful examination of his own life and he encouraged his allies and the young men that were around him to do the same. There is not a single shred of evidence to support impiety or that he attempted to introduce different gods. There is not a single shred of evidence that he corrupted the youth by telling them at some points you need to question democracy, and he inspired the youth through self-examination. ...We all grow as a society by engaging in discourse with our

friends. ...He said we should all strive to be good. We should all strive to do good deeds and that's what he preached to those young men. He told you we should all perform acts of charity; we should all engage in good acts. And he told you that it was his duty as a philosopher to seek truth and to question everything. And for that he should be put to the death?"

The four judges found Socrates guilty by a vote of three to one. U.S. Federal District Court Judge **Jorge Alonso** of the Northern District of Illinois was the sole jurist to find Socrates not guilty on the second charge of corrupting Athens' youth. He found him guilty on the first charge of impiety, or disrespecting the Greek gods, as did the other three judges: Illinois Supreme Court Justice **Joy V. Cunningham**, and Cook County Circuit Court Judges **Anthony C. Kyriakopoulos** and **Anna Demacopoulos**. Judge **Charles P. Kocoras** of the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Illinois delivered an opening greeting for the audience, explaining the importance of the lessons still to be learned from ancient Greece including the foundations of democracy and trial by jury. He ordered the re-trial because Socrates had not been allowed to testify in his defense when the National Hellenic Museum first tried him in 2013.

The 12-member jury on stage, and one alternate, however, found Socrates not guilty by a margin of 10-3. Jurors included **Jim Sotos**, Managing Partner at Sotos Law Firm; **Georgia Tasiopoulou**, Consul of Greece in Chicago; **Young Richard Kim**, Associate Professor and Head of Classics and Mediterranean Studies at the University of Illinois Chicago; **Eleni Katsoulis**, Senior Counsel of Northwestern Memorial Healthcare and President of the Hellenic Bar Association; **John Howell**, Host at 890 WLS AM; **Andrea Hanis**, Editor of Chicago Daily Law Bulletin; **Tony Karman**, President and Director of EXPO CHICAGO; **Johnny Mars**, DJ at 93 WXRT FM; **Toby Eveland**, Managing Partner at Saul Ewing; **Monica Eng**, Reporter at Axios Chicago; **Monica Eng**, Reporter at Axios Chicago; **Louis G. Apostol**, Public Administrator of Cook County; and alternate juror **George Bellas**, Partner at Bellas & Wachowski Attorneys at Law.

Support for NHM's The Trial of Socrates was generously provided by lead sponsors **The Jaharis Family Foundation**, **Calamos Investments** and **Clifford Law Offices**, together with numerous other sponsors and ticket buyers.

Socrates' trial has fascinated and troubled generations who have struggled to comprehend the death of one of history's greatest philosophers at the hands of a lawful jury. Convicted in Athens in 399 BCE with impiety and corrupting the youth, Socrates' pursuit of wisdom was seen as a threat to the survival of Athenian democracy. NHM's The Trial of Socrates invited audiences to consider anew the fragility of democracy, the limits of freedom, and the imperfection of human justice. Guests at the Trial participated by exploring the arguments of each side and submitting their "guilty" or "not guilty" voting chips to literally tip the scale and make their verdict heard, in the style of the courts of ancient Athens.

The dynamic **NHM Trial Series** highlights the enduring relevance and value of Greek thought and history. It has grown both in reputation and following since its inception in 2013. In 2016, NHM's The Trial of Antigone was broadcast on WTTW TV (PBS Chicago) and in May 2017 it was nominated for a Midwest regional Emmy. Subsequent NHM Trial Series events have also aired on public television and received regional Emmy nominations. Since 2017, the annual event has been qualified by the Illinois Attorney Registration & Disciplinary Commission (IARDC) for continuing legal education (CLE) credit. Attorneys attending these events can register for CLE credit on site.

About the National Hellenic Museum

The **National Hellenic Museum (NHM)** has a mission to share Greek history, art, culture and the Greek American story. NHM preserves the Hellenic legacy and makes this rich heritage relevant today through its extensive collection of more than 10,000 physical artifacts, hundreds of oral histories, exhibitions, educational programs and special events. Originally founded in 1983 and located in Chicago's historic Greektown neighborhood since 2011, the museum provides lifelong learning for the community and sparks inquiry and discussion about the broader issues in our lives and society. Regular museum hours are Thursday through Sunday from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information, visit nationalhellenicmuseum.org or call 312-655-1234.