Monday, May 10, 2004

WRITER: Heidi Murphy, 706/542-5172, hmurphy@uga.edu CONTACT: Marc Galvin, 706/542-0335, magalvin@uga.edu

Rebecca White, 706/542-7140, rhwhite@uga.edu

## GEORGIA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE TO SPEAK AT GEORGIA LAW'S GRADUATION

ATHENS, Ga. – Supreme Court of Georgia Presiding Justice Leah Ward Sears will deliver the keynote address at the University of Georgia School of Law's commencement on Saturday, May 15.

A distinguished jurist, Sears is the first African-American woman to serve as a Superior Court judge in Georgia. In 1992, she became the first woman and the youngest person to ever serve on the state's Supreme Court. Later that same year, she also became the first woman to win a contested statewide election in Georgia when she was reelected to her Supreme Court post.

Prior to becoming a judge, Sears was an attorney with the law firm Alston & Bird. She is the recipient of numerous honors, including an honorary Doctor of Law from Morehouse College and being named one of the "100 Most Influential Georgians" by Georgia Trend magazine.

Sears earned her bachelor's degree from Cornell University, a law degree from Emory University School of Law and a Master of Laws from the University of Virginia School of Law.

At this year's graduation ceremony, the law school will confer Juris Doctor degrees on 227 students who have successfully completed three years of legal study. Also, 20 Master of Laws students, who have completed one year of graduate legal study, will be recognized.

The ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. on the quadrangle in front of the law school on UGA's North Campus. In the event of rain, the ceremony will be moved to Stegeman Coliseum.

Graduating Class of 2004 President Russell E. Blythe will provide the official welcome and Vice President Caroline G. Castle will introduce Sears. The pair will also present the 2004 class gift. Graduates have selected Hosch Professor Thomas A. Eaton and Carter Chair R. Perry Sentell Jr. to serve as honorary marshals and read the names of the graduates. In addition, students have chosen to recognize to two members of the law faculty who passed away during the academic year as honorary marshals. They are Associate Professor Larry E. Blount and Brock Professor L. Ray Patterson.

Welcoming the newly graduated alumni into the Law School Association will be association President Julia W. Lumpkin. Other commencement speakers include: UGA Provost Arnett C. Mace Jr., Georgia Law Interim Dean Rebecca H. White and Georgia Law associate deans Paul M. Kurtz and Gabriel M. Wilner. The final member of the platform party will be Georgia Law Director of Student Affairs and Registrar Marc A. Galvin.

Music will be provided by The Athens Brass. Athens-Clarke County Sheriff Ira Edwards Jr. will lead the graduation procession, in keeping with the ceremonial role of the local sheriff in university commencements since the early 1800s.

Georgia Law is currently ranked as one of the top four public law schools in the Southeast and one of the top 11 public law schools in the nation.

1 of 2 7/29/2009 3:01 PM

##

2 of 2