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Law conference to focus on poverty

Athens, Ga. - The third annual Working in the Public Interest Law Conference will explore practical approaches to solving poverty through the law with notable speakers from across the country, including Yale University's Stephen Wizner and prominent Atlanta attorney and *Fulton County Daily Report*'s 2007 "Newsmaker of the Year" B.J. Bernstein. The conference will be held April 4-5 at the University of Georgia School of Law and is open to the public; however, registration is required.

"This conference seeks to bring together eminent practitioners in their respective fields, as well as students and faculty, to discuss practical approaches to lawyering that can best serve the underprivileged," conference organizer and third-year School of Law student Nandi F. Campbell said. "We hope to provide participants with dynamic and creative ways to combat poverty through the vehicle of law."

The two-day conference will include a variety of panel discussions and roundtables on such topics as: civil liberties; race and the criminal justice system; decriminalizing mental illness; funding public defender systems; the media's role in the law; immigration; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth in state sponsored institutions; environmental justice; and women's reproductive rights.

There will also be a moot court exposition on Civil Gideon, which will explore whether the constitution requires a lawyer for poor people in civil cases involving fundamental legal needs, such as shelter. A panel of "judges" will hear oral arguments, discuss those arguments and then field questions from conference participants.

Some key panelists for the various sessions include: Georgia Court of Appeals Chief Judge Anne Elizabeth Barnes, Southern Poverty Law Center's Director of the Immigrant Justice Project Mary Bauer, Georgia Public Defender Standards Council Mental Health Advocate Sabrina Rhinehart, GreenLaw Executive Director Justine Thompson and Southern Center for Human Rights Staff Attorney Gerald R. "Gerry" Weber.

The conference will begin Friday, April 4, at 5:30 p.m. with a keynote address by Wizner, Yale Law School Douglas Clinical Professor of Law and supervising attorney, who has authored numerous articles on legal education, legal services, ethics, juvenile justice and poverty law.

Following Wizner's speech, Phylliss J. Holmen, executive director of Georgia Legal Services and member of the American Bar Association's Presidential Task Force on Access to Civil Justice, will be honored with the 2008 WIPI Lifetime Achievement Award. Emory University School of Law second-year students Terri Porter and Stephen Weyer, who both serve on the Emory Public Interest Committee Student Board as co-chairs of the committee's Inspiration Awards, will be jointly presented with the 2008 WIPI Student Achievement Award.

On Saturday, after more than a dozen panel and roundtable discussions, the closing keynote speech will be delivered by Bernstein, *Fulton County Daily Report*'s 2007 "Newsmaker of the Year," who specializes in criminal law. She has handled a number of high profile cases and has represented Genarlow Wilson, the rapper DaBrat and one of the Gold Club defendants, to name a few.

The conference is free for UGA students and faculty. All other participants will be required to pay a slight fee. For complete information or to register for the conference, please visit www.law.uga.edu/wipi. CLE credits for attorneys will be available.