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Public interest law conference to address poverty issues

ATHENS, Ga. - The second annual Working in the Public Interest Law Conference at the University of Georgia School of Law will explore practical approaches to lawyering that can best serve the poor by attracting an extensive group of speakers, panelists and attendees to campus March 30 and 31.

This student-organized conference seeks to bring together eminent practitioners in their respective fields, students and faculty to discuss practical solutions to today's social justice issues. "Although many of this year's topics apply specifically to the Southeast, we are taking a broader approach to public interest law. We are excited to be presenting two panels in conjunction with other law schools - Ole Miss and SUNY-Buffalo," conference executive director and third-year law student Heidi M. Taylor said.

The two-day conference will include a variety of panel discussions and roundtables on matters relating to poverty law, addressing such topics as education, affordable housing, juvenile delinquency, immigration, community economic development, voting rights, workers' rights, health care and indigent defense.

Panelists will include: Roy E. Barnes, the former governor of Georgia; Jonathan Blazer, the public benefits policy attorney for the National Immigration Law Center; Emmett Bondurant, a member of the Georgia Public Defender Standards Council; Linda Couch, the deputy director for the National Low Income Housing Coalition; Ryan King, a policy analyst for The Sentencing Project; Michael Monahan, the director of the Pro Bono Project for the State Bar of Georgia; and Joel Packer, the director of education policy and practice for the National Education Association.

The conference will open with a keynote address to be delivered by Western Circuit Superior Court Judge Steve C. Jones, the chairman of the anti-poverty initiative Partners for a Prosperous Athens, on Friday at 5:30 p.m. Following the speech, Georgia Law Professor Milner S. Ball, the holder of the Caldwell Chair in Constitutional Law and founder of the law school's Public Interest Practicum, will be honored with the 2007 WIPI Lifetime Achievement Award. Georgia State University College of Law third-year student Cliff Williams, who interned with the Georgia Innocence Project and helped to free a wrongfully-imprisoned man after more than 20 years of incarceration, will be presented with the 2007 WIPI Student Achievement Award.

Fifteen panel and roundtables discussions will be held on Saturday, as well as a career networking reception. Stephen Bright, the president of the Southern Center for Human Rights, will deliver the closing keynote speech at 4:30 p.m.

Last year, more than 500 people attended the inaugural conference where former U.S. Sen. John Edwards delivered the keynote address.

The conference is open to the public, but registration is required by March 27. For more information and to register, please visit <http://www.law.uga.edu/wipi/>.

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