Georgia Law in the news

Courthouse displays of Ten Commandments possible

The Georgia Senate has passed a bill that will allow the display of the Ten Commandments in county courthouses. Although the U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled against a display in Kentucky, constitutional law expert Dan T. Coenen told National Public Radio that, despite its numerous opponents, the Georgia bill may still have a chance if contested in the court system. With Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, who cast the deciding vote in the Kentucky case, replaced by Justice Samuel A. Alito, the situation “may flip [to one] much more tolerant of the appearance of religious symbols in public places,” he said.

Conspiracy theories continue to surface on Lincoln’s assassination

On the April anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s assassination, historians continued the debate that his death was more than a “simple conspiracy” by John Wilkes Booth. Georgia Law Professor Donald E. Wilkes Jr., who has authored a number of articles concerning Lincoln’s assassination, commented in The Washington Times that “new evidence indicates Booth was a Confederate secret agent.” Disputing the idea that he acted alone in the murder, Wilkes said, “It seems much more likely that the Confederate government knew and approved of what Booth was doing.”

Tougher sentences for juveniles

The Georgia Legislature has passed a law allowing judges to confer stricter sentences on juvenile offenders. Amy’s Law authority Anne Proffitt Dupre (J.D.’88) said in the Los Angeles Times that, despite the lack of statistical evidence to prove children are committing more serious offenses such as murder, overwhelming public opinion holds that these crimes have been more frequent in recent years, leading many Americans to become strong advocates of harsher penalties.

Citizenship restrictions imminent?

Adding to the debate on immigration reform, several federal legislators are seeking to limit the 14th Amendment, which grants automatic citizenship to virtually all children born in the United States, even if their parents are illegal immigrants. Commenting on the subject to USA Today, immigration law guru Peter J. Spiro said these children are likely to spend their entire lives in our country. By denying these children citizenship, “you’d have a significant portion of the population being legally subordinated on an inter-generational basis.”

States embroiled in controversy over tax incentives

The legal ambiguity of a state’s use of tax incentives to attract industry has been brought to the attention of the U.S. Supreme Court in a recent case involving the state of Ohio. Most states see these incentives as an important means of economic competition but fear rulings against their constitutionality. While a ruling limiting incentives will most likely not do irreparable damage, tax law specialist Walter Hellerstein told The National Law Journal “one easy way for states to encourage business is simply to subsidize them.” Hellerstein was also quoted on the topic in Entrepreneur Magazine, the Boston Business Journal and the Dallas Business Journal, among others.

Visiting scholars deliver international colloquium series

This spring Georgia Law offered a new colloquium series focused on international law, where notable scholars from other institutions presented substantial works in progress to the law school’s faculty and students. As part of the International Law Colloquium, students wrote papers on each of the manuscripts presented, actively participated in the colloquium discussion and received course credit.

Co-organizer of the colloquium Daniel M. Bodansky, the holder of the Woodruff Chair in International Law, said bringing in top scholars as part of a program such as this contributes tremendously to the intellectual vibrancy of the law school.

“A central feature of the international law colloquium series was active student engagement,” he said. “I think students were really excited by the opportunity to participate directly in the scholarly conversation about cutting-edge international issues relating to the war on terrorism and the role of international law in the U.S. legal system. This type of dialogue benefits both faculty and students.”

Featured international scholars, their home institution and paper title are listed below.

Roger P. Alford, Pepperdine University, “Foreign Relations as a Matter of Interpretation: The Use and Abuse of Charming Betsy”

Laura Dickinson, University of Connecticut, “Democracy and Trust”

Mark A. Drumb, Washington & Lee University, “Atrocity and Punishment”

Karen Knop, University of Toronto, “Enemies and Outlaws: War and the Public/Private Citizen”


Brad Roth, Wayne State University, “State Sovereignty and International Legality”

Edward T. Swaine, University of Pennsylvania, “Alien Authority”