

INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

FALL 2009 SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS

The agenda of the Institute for Legislative and Governmental Affairs for the fall semester, 2009, included a wide variety of programs. Once again we hosted the commemoration of Constitution Day and the annual conference to review important decisions of the United States Supreme Court from the prior term. In addition, we entertained visitors from Ukraine, who came to discuss legal education and other topics relating to the rule of law.

The Institute also hosted a hearing before Dr. Sherri Killens, Commissioner of the Department of Early Education and Care, which focused on early childhood education. The School of Law participated in the annual Siena College summer intern program and offered, together with the Massachusetts Bar Association, a series of continuing legal education programs. The Massachusetts Appeals Court also conducted its semi-annual session in the J. Gerard Pellegrini Moot Court Room.

Constitution Day, September 17, featured a lecture by award-winning scholar and Western New England College History Professor John Baick. He spoke of the "Myths, Misconceptions, and Morality: How Every Generation Reinvents the Constitution." In this address, Dr. Baick traced the changing meaning of the Constitution in American history, starting in the present with the current debate over the government's role in healthcare and ending in the late eighteenth century with the adoption of the Constitution. In between, he covered several other pivotal moments in which Americans have interpreted, reinterpreted, and misinterpreted the document that is the foundation of the Rule of Law, as well as central to our national identity, culture, and mythology.

For the past 14 years, the School of Law has sponsored an annual review of the decisions of the United States Supreme Court at its last term. On October 3, Professors Erin Buzuvis, Leora Harpaz, Arthur Leavens, and Bruce Miller presented the principal cases of the 2008-2009 term. Interested readers may review the presentations on our webpage. The discussions included decisions involving freedom of speech, affirmative action, criminal justice, and strip searches. The seminar also explored recent changes in the makeup of the Court with the departure of Justice David Souter and the arrival of Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

On October 27, we had the privilege of hosting the visit of six Ukraine nationals. They were in the United States as part of the "Open World Program at the Library of Congress." Attorney Simon J. Brighenti Jr. '87, a member of the West Springfield Rotary Club, which sponsored their visit to western Massachusetts, facilitated the visit. As government officials and officers in nongovernmental organizations, the Ukrainians, some of whom had legal training, had a strong interest in visiting an American law school. While here, the visitors and law school personnel shared their ideas and information about legal education, the rule of law, providing legal services to under-served populations, and other relevant legal topics.

On October 28, the Institute hosted a public forum led by Dr. Sherri Killens, Commissioner of the Department of Early Education and Care. Entitled "Massachusetts Birth to School Age Task Force: Phase 1: Pre-Birth to Age Three Forum." Mrs. Dora Robinson, President and CEO, United Way of Pioneer Valley, facilitated the discussion. Senator Gale D. Candaras '82, the State Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities, introduced Commissioner Killens and provided legislative perspective.



Assistant Director of Career Services Sam Charron (far left), Associate Dean Beth Cohen (third from left), and Legislative Institute Director Art Wolf (second from right), pictured above with our guests from Ukraine.

Dr. Sherri Killens