

INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

SPRING 2010 SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS

The Legislative Institute had an especially active spring semester. In addition to the programs noted here, we entertained the semi-annual visit of the Massachusetts Appeals Court. Further, the Institute offered a simulation course in Legislation, in which students engaged in research, writing, drafting, and role playing (legislators and committee witnesses).

In February, we hosted Lt. Gov. Tim Murray '94, who chairs the Governor's Council to Address Sexual and Domestic Violence. In the J. Gerard Pellegrini Moot Court Room, he presided over a community forum to explore these issues, which included experts on and victims of sexual and domestic violence.

In April, our Fourth Annual Regional Civil Rights Conference drew over 180 people, with Attorney John Relman delivering the keynote address. Attorney Relman presented several cases in which public officials and private persons sought to interfere with and prevent the enforcement of fair housing and other rights of minorities.

In addition, Conference panelists addressed fair housing, predatory lending, and foreclosure litigation strategies; community development and obstructions to affordable housing; hate crimes and community policing; and reducing barriers to employment and housing because of disability, domestic violence, and other disadvantages.

During the spring, we were also privileged to host a panel discussion based on the acclaimed book: *The Guantanamo Lawyers: Inside a Prison Outside the Law*. Book authors Mark Denbeaux, Professor of Law at Seton Hall Law School, and Jonathan Hafetz, Attorney with the National Security Project of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), were joined by fellow Attorneys Ellen Lubell and William Newman, local ACLU Director.

The four lawyers have represented detainees held at Guantanamo. The panelists explored the struggles to bring justice to GITMO against seemingly insurmountable odds, giving voice to the experiences of the detainees.

Ms. Brittany Decker, a Western New England Communication major, and School of Law Professor Matthew Charity brought new perspectives to the Cambodian "killing fields." Professor Charity began the program by exploring the autocratic rule of the Khmer Rouge from 1975-79, resulting in the murders of over one million Cambodians, and the current criminal prosecutions.

Ms. Decker had recently visited Cambodia under the auspices of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation. She showed her pictures and offered commentary based on her observations, interviews, and photos about the contemporary impact of the "killing fields" on Cambodian life.

The Institute also worked with our Office of Career Services and International Law Society to bring Attorney Brenda Oppermann '04 to campus to discuss employment opportunities in international law. She has worked in Iraq, Sudan, and other "hot spots" around the world, addressing human rights and related issues.

As part of our annual summer program, the Institute hosted two Siena College students. Under faculty supervision, Siena fellows Dan Supple and Jill Wojdyla engaged in extensive research and writing projects. Jill worked with Professor Bruce Miller, exploring the Military Commissions Act of 2006 as the legal basis for trying detainees in the war on terrorism.

Dan Supple, whom I supervised, examined reforming medical malpractice in Massachusetts, focusing on the tribunal system and the limits on certain monetary awards in comparison with New York. As part of his research, Dan traveled with State Senator Gale Candaras '82 to the Massachusetts State House to further explore the critical issues.



Lt. Governor Tim Murray '94 greets Dean Art Gaudio and Professor Art Wolf.



Attorney John Relman



Brittany Decker