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Riley Institute, Charleston School of Law to Co-Host Symposium on Constitutional Reform Today & Friday

The Charleston School of Law and The Riley Institute at Furman University are partnering to sponsor a two-day symposium in Charleston Jan. 15-16 that will focus on state constitutional reform in the 21st century.

The “State Constitutional Reform in the New South” symposium will explore such issues as the bans on illegal immigrant admission to state colleges and universities, the role of South Carolina’s governor, and whether the South Carolina constitution should guarantee more than a “minimally adequate” education.



The symposium is the inaugural offering in the annual “Law and Society” series, which is presented by the Charleston Law Review of the Charleston School of Law and the Richard W. Riley Institute of Government, Politics and Public Leadership at Furman.

The program begins Thursday, Jan. 15 at 5 p.m. in the Charleston Music Hall with a keynote address by Ronald Sullivan, Jr., and Charles McKinney. The two are founding fellows of the Jamestown Project, a diverse, action-oriented think tank of new leaders based in Cambridge, Mass.

The symposium continues on Friday, Jan. 16 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a series of talks and panel discussions by scholars, judges, former governors, legislators, lawyers and public advocates. The second day’s activities will take place at the Charleston Museum.

Cost for the symposium is \$50 for practicing attorneys and \$25 for academics, government employees and non-profits. Students are offered free admission. Participants can register online.

The speakers and panelists for the symposium include Bobby Harrell, speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives; Jim Rex, South Carolina Superintendent of Education; Richard W. Riley, former South Carolina Governor and U.S. Secretary of Education; Jim Hodges, former Governor of South Carolina; Jack Bass, noted author and professor at the College of Charleston; and Don Fowler, adjunct professor at the University of South Carolina and former chair of the Democratic National Committee. Chief Justice Jean H. Toal of the South Carolina Supreme Court and Chief Judge Kaye G. Hearn of the South Carolina Court of Appeals will also participate.

“Constitutional reform is the process by which citizens change the language of their most important law — that of a constitution,” said William Cook, an assistant professor at the Charleston School of Law and advisor to the Charleston Law Review. “This symposium will examine the role state constitutions play in not only shaping the rule of law, but also maintaining it. This issue is relevant because it reflects the emerging trend in many states to re-examine their state’s highest law in order to update it in accord with the 21st century.”

According to Don Gordon, executive director of the Riley Institute at Furman, the conference could not come at a more appropriate time. “Our state and others are confronted by a series of extremely important issues,” he said. “This conference represents an opportunity for a common sense discussion of constitutional reform by some of South Carolina’s most experienced and informed leaders.”

The Charleston Law Review is the flagship journal of the Charleston School of Law. The Law Review will publish a companion issue to the symposium that may be ordered at

www.charlestonlawreview.org. In its past issues, the Charleston Law Review has published significant public figures ranging across the political spectrum from President-elect Barack Obama to former presidential legal advisor John Yoo.

The Riley Institute at Furman, named for Furman graduate Richard Riley, offers a broad array of programs designed to engage students and citizens across South Carolina in the various arenas of politics, public policy, and public leadership. It is associated with the university's Department of Political Science.

For more information, call the Charleston School of Law at 843-377-2440.

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