

International Conference of Women Judges to Explore Gender and Justice As U.S. Supreme Court Nomination Focuses Attention on Female Judges

*American Jewish Congress and American University
Bring Together Leading Women Judges From More Than a Dozen Countries*

June 1, 2009 (Washington, DC) As the nomination of a woman to the U.S. Supreme Court focuses new attention on the role and impact of female judges, the American Jewish Congress and the Women and International Law Program at American University Washington College of Law will sponsor an international conference of women judges, June 14-16, 2009 at Washington College of Law in Washington, D.C.

Exploring a range of issues related to gender and justice, the conference, "Gender & Justice: An International Inquiry," will bring together more than 20 esteemed women judges from Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bhutan, Brazil, Cameroon, Ghana, India, Ireland, Israel, Sri Lanka, The Netherlands, the U.S., and other countries. Many are members of their national Supreme Court. Others, such as the Hon. Mora Jasim Al Kuwari of Bahrain and the Hon. Tashi Chhozom of Bhutan, are the first women appointed to the bench when changes to their constitutions permitted women to serve as judges in those countries.

The conference will examine the challenges female judges face across diverse legal and judicial systems and cultures around the world, and identify opportunities to use the law to change women's lives. For example, there will be a session on the impact of religion on judging featuring Muslim, Jewish, Hindi, and Mormon panelists. Scheduled panel discussions include:

- The Impact of Religion and Tradition on Judging
- Religious Law and Women's Rights: A New Era?
- Status of Women in the Courts: A Report from Around the World
- The Role of the Courts in Ending Violence Against Women
- Maintaining Judicial Independence in Times of Crisis
- Prosecuting Gender-Based and Sexual Crimes Against Women: The Role of International - Courts and Criminal Tribunals
- Eliminating Gender Bias in the Courts

The audience will consist of U.S. federal and state judges and prosecutors, law school deans, bar association presidents, practitioners, and others interested in women's rights, law and justice. The Washington College of Law will apply for continuing legal education credits for conference attendees.

"With the nomination of Sonia Sotomayor, there is no better time to explore the many issues and challenges facing women judges throughout the world," said American Jewish Congress President Richard Gordon. "The Women's Division of the American Jewish Congress, which supports women's empowerment as a core issue of our advocacy efforts,

is proud to bring together such an esteemed and highly accomplished group of justices. We look forward to providing a platform from which an examination of critical issues women judges face everyday will lead to real solutions.”

“As one of the first law schools in the world founded, in 1896, by women, Washington College of Law has long supported initiatives to strengthen women’s rights and gender equality, as well as the vital institution of a free and independent judiciary, around the world,” said Washington College of Law Dean Claudio Grossman. “The current climate, including the recent nomination of Sonia Sotomayor, reinforces the importance of this conference and the critical issues it will address.”

Since 1984, the Women and the Law Program at Washington College of Law has promoted the integration of women's rights and gender studies into legal education, practice, and doctrine. To foster the study and teaching of gender and international or comparative law, the program expanded to include a Women and International Law Program in 1994.

“The conference will bring together women judges from diverse legal and judicial systems and cultures who are dedicated to gender equality and justice for all to examine the challenges they face and the opportunities to use the law to change women’s lives,” said conference chair Betsy Plevan, a partner and co-head of the International Labor and Employment Practice Group at Proskauer Rose LLP. “Many of them are members of or chief justice of their national Supreme Courts.”