

TOURO LAW INAUGURATES FIRST IN THE NATION AGING AND LONGEVITY LAW INSTITUTE

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Prof. Marianne Artusio

In July 2013 Touro Law opened the new Institute on Aging and Longevity Law. As our nation experiences the effects of the increasing elderly segment of the population, their legal needs and consequences for the law and the justice system will correspondingly escalate as well. The Institute has

been established to examine the consequences to the law of this demographic transformation and promote the adoption of laws, policies and practices that recognize the unique needs of the aging and enhance healthy, stable, respectful and contented aging both for seniors, and those who care for them. Serving as a resource for judges, lawyers, law students and other professionals who assist seniors, the Institute will offer a multi-disciplinary approach in partnership with Touro's medical, pharmacy, health sciences and social work schools to provide cutting edge interdisciplinary training, research and continuing education opportunities.

Offering intensive training, preparing law graduates to become compassionate and vigorous advocates for their clients, the Institute will foster a commitment to civic engagement on matters affecting aging. With the recognition that lawyers graduating today must have specialized knowledge and skills to assist elderly clients, the Institute will be a resource for law schools nationwide in the development of teaching materials and programs to educate tomorrow's lawyers. An initial project of the Institute will be to develop advanced academic programs beyond the J.D. degree, enriching the formal educational opportunities for lawyers and providing unique perspectives on the current laws, programs and services that affect an aging population.

The Institute's mission includes exploring critical issues that impact the elderly and advancing significant reforms that can improve the potential for a productive, safe and dignified long life.

Studies and reports issued by the Institute will identify important problems in the law and the legal system, highlighting possible solutions. The Institute intends to be at the forefront of innovative thinking on legal issues affecting aging and will publish articles and commentary at the vanguard of academic exploration. Institute publications will offer a venue for the widest exchange of thoughtful discussion on the legal consequences and challenges of aging and longevity.

Robert Abrams, whose expertise and engagement in the development of the field of elder law and concern for the rights of the aging inspired the creation of this Institute, will serve as the Chair of the Advisory Committee. A nationally-recognized leader in the field of elder law, he is contributing his vast knowledge and almost limitless energy to shaping its future. Bob's wisdom and sensitivity to the distinct needs of an aging population will guide the Institute's direction. Currently Bob is developing in conjunction with the Institute a multi-year certificate program for lawyers in the field of aging and longevity law. The program will start with guardianship and will deliver detailed and interdisciplinary instruction designed to prepare lawyers and judges for practice in this important and growing area of law.

Rounding out the current staff of the Institute are Professor Marianne Artusio the Director and Robert Cannon, Coordinator. Professor Artusio has long experience preparing law students for serving senior clients through her work over twenty years as the Director of Touro's Elder Law Clinic. Robert Cannon, a graduate of the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, holds an LL.M. from Cardozo School of Law where he specialized in the law of guardianships.

Because an essential mission of the Institute is to educate lawyers and other professionals of the unique problems of the elderly, the Institute devoted its inaugural program to exploring the effects of diminishing capacity in the legal arena. Held on October 7, 2013, this day-long program, entitled, *The Capacity Crisis: What Lawyers Need to Know and Do for Their Clients, the Public and Themselves*, brought together lawyers, judges, doctors, social workers, public officials to examine the multitude of consequences that diminished mental capacity has for the law. The conference focused on the causes and implications of diminished mental capacity, the need for the government to address the legal needs of individuals with diminished mental capacity and what lawyers and judges need to know and do to address the capacity crisis. The audience heard from Greg Olsen, the Acting Director of the New York State Office for the Aging; Hon. Gail Prudenti, Chief Administrative Judge, New York State Unified Court System; Dean Robert Goldberg of the Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine, Honorable Sol Wachtler, former Chief Judge, New York State, Kathleen Rice, Nassau County, District Attorney, Melissa J. Earle, Associate Dean, Touro College Graduate School of Social Work, Robert Abrams, Marianne Artusio and many other distinguished lawyers, esteemed for their contributions to the development legal rights of the elderly and compassionate treatment for their concerns.