

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

University of Idaho plans Constitution Day event for Sept. 17

The University of Idaho will sponsor a statewide panel discussion about the constitutional questions surrounding same-sex marriage Wednesday, Sept. 17, as part of a national observance of Constitution Day. The program will begin at 3 p.m. PT, 4 p.m. MT.

The discussion will originate in Boise in the Legacy Pointe Room of the Idaho Water Center, 322 E. Front St. Students and faculty in Moscow and Coeur d'Alene will participate through the UI's statewide video link at the courtroom of the Menard Law Building, 711 S. Rayburn, Moscow, and Room 241 of the UI-Coeur d'Alene Center, 1031 N. Academic Way, Coeur d'Alene. The program is free and open to the public.

Speakers will be Deborah Ferguson and Craig Durham, attorneys for the plaintiffs in *Latta v. Otter*, the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Idaho's ban on same-sex marriage, and Tom Perry, counsel to Idaho Gov. C. L. "Butch" Otter, who defended the state law. The challenge to Idaho's law was heard earlier this month by the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

"This discussion of *Latta v. Otter* concerns an issue that is currently being litigated throughout the country and that undoubtedly will have to be resolved by the U.S. Supreme Court, given the importance of the issue for so many states and individuals," said Richard Seamon, associate dean, UI College of Law.

Shaakirrah Sanders, associate professor of law, will moderate the panel in Boise, and Michael Park, assistant professor of journalism and mass media, will moderate questions and provide commentary in Moscow. Continuing-legal education credit is available for lawyers who attend.

Four Idaho same-sex couples filed suit in November 2013 seeking to overturn the 2006 amendment to Idaho's constitution prohibiting same-sex marriage and any "domestic legal union" in the state. U.S. Magistrate Candy Dale ruled in May 2014 that the Idaho law was unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The state, through the governor's office, appealed the ruling, and the 9th Circuit court allowed the law to stand, pending the appeal.

A panel of federal judges heard oral arguments in the case, along with challenges to same-sex marriage bans in Nevada and Hawaii, Sept. 8 in San Francisco. The court gave no indication when it might decide on the appeals, and there is no deadline.

Constitution Day recognizes the events in 1787 years ago when delegates to the Constitutional Convention met for the last time to sign the document they had created. The late Sen. Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia inserted language into a 2005 federal spending bill that requires all educational institutions, including colleges and universities, which receive federal funds from any agency to have programming for Constitution Day.

Past observances at the University of Idaho have dealt with free press and fair trial issues, leaks of government secrets, violent images in video games, and federal drug laws.

For more information about Constitution Day, visit <http://www.constitutionday.com/>

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