

News Release

For Immediate Release

UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT MERCY SCHOOL OF LAW LAUNCHES NATIONAL TOUR TO PROVIDE PRO BONO ASSISTANCE ON FEDERAL BENEFITS ISSUES TO VETERANS

The UDM Law Veterans Clinic is based in Michigan. It only provides assistance related to state issues under Michigan law and/or to federal veterans benefits issues. When in states other than Michigan, the MLO will only provide assistance with respect to federal veterans benefits issues.

National Tour Kicks off in Detroit where Assistance Began; School Asks Pro Bono Attorneys Around the Country to Assist Veterans

Detroit, February 7, 2008 – The University of Detroit Mercy School of Law (UDM Law) has launched a nationwide tour of its Mobile Law Office (MLO) which will provide free assistance and/or representation to thousands of low-income veterans on federal benefits issues throughout the United States. The tour officially kicks off in Detroit on Thursday, February 7, at 10:00 a.m. at the UDM Law Atrium at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law, 651 E. Jefferson, across from the Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit.

UDM Law is the only law school in the country with an MLO, a Recreational Vehicle that has been outfitted as a law office. For the national tour, General Motors is donating a specially designed, state-of-the-art RV that follows ADA accessibility guidelines, including a wheel-chair lift, oversize bathroom and same-level floor throughout the coach. Through the MLO, volunteer attorneys and UDM Law faculty and students counseled and/or otherwise assisted over 800 people during the past year. The MLO has made numerous stops at regional senior centers, churches, and other similar facilities, as well as regular stops at facilities where veterans congregate.

“When we started our Veterans Clinic, we were overwhelmed by the response and the requests for assistance from veterans both in Michigan and around the country,” said Mark Gordon, Dean of the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law. “Our veterans deserve the best care available, and with the nationwide launch of our MLO, our Veterans Clinic will be able to help additional low-income veterans seeking federal benefits assistance.”

To maximize the reach and impact of UDM Law’s national MLO tour, a number of local attorneys and legal support groups will be assisting low-income veterans in a pro bono capacity in each city. During the tour, UDM Law will provide training on federal benefits issues to attorneys around the nation who are willing to donate time to assist veterans on a pro bono basis. The law school is also asking additional law firms and attorneys across the country to volunteer providing pro bono assistance to veterans.

“These veterans have given more than we can ever repay,” said Gordon. “UDM Law is ready to give what it can and we know that many other attorneys and groups are doing the same. We hope that by drawing attention to those who are already helping, we will also encourage those who have not yet stepped forward to answer the call as well.”

Post-Newsweek Stations, Inc. is the television sponsor of MLO events in six major markets: Detroit, San Antonio, Houston, Orlando, Miami, and Jacksonville.

After the kickoff in Detroit, the tour’s first stop will be in San Antonio, Texas from Wednesday, February 13 through Friday, February 15 at the American Legion Alamo Post #2 and at Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid.

Additional tour stops are planned for the following cities:

Date	Location
2/7	Detroit
2/13-2/15	San Antonio
2/18	Austin
2/20-2/22	Houston
2/25	Mobile/Pensacola
2/27-2/29	Orlando/Dayton
3/3	West Palm Beach
3/5-3/7	Miami/Ft. Lauderdale
3/10	Fort Myers
3/12-3/14	Tampa/St. Petersburg
3/17	Gainesville/Tallahassee
3/19-3/20	Jacksonville

After Jacksonville, UDM Law will continue the tour throughout the year stopping in places such as Savannah, Atlanta, Fayetteville/Jacksonville, Raleigh Durham, Winston Salem, Charlotte, Knoxville, Nashville, Lexington, Louisville, Bloomington (Indiana), Indianapolis, Dayton, Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, Harrisburg, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Richmond, Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Des Moines, Omaha, Denver, Salt Lake City, Boise, Spokane, Seattle, Portland, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix, Albuquerque, Oklahoma City, Wichita, Topeka, Kansas City, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, State College, Buffalo, Syracuse, Boston, and Hartford.

In November, the school created a freestanding veterans clinic and launched a statewide tour of its Mobile Law Office. With the help of law school faculty and attorneys acting in a pro bono capacity, law students have been able to provide representation and other forms of assistance for Michigan's veterans in their efforts to seek federal disability payments. The MLO has already visited Grand Rapids, Flint, Lansing, Battle Creek, and Traverse City, and additional tour stops are planned for, but not limited to, Pontiac, Benton Harbor and Muskegon.

Helping U.S. Veterans in Need

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, there are approximately 24 million veterans in the United States.

In 2004, using Veterans Affairs data, the Knight Ridder newspaper group found that an estimated 572,000 veterans nationwide were eligible but were not accessing disability payments and services, largely because they are unaware that payments are owed to them.

Providing An Important Public Service

The University of Detroit Mercy School of Law has significant experience in addressing disability issues, and its Urban Law Clinic, established in 1965, was the first law school clinical program in Michigan. Most recently, the Urban Law Clinic has represented senior citizens in obtaining Social Security Disability and SSI benefits, including recovering retroactive benefits in a number of cases that brought over \$20,000 per claim to seniors who had been waiting an extensive period to get a hearing.

UDM Law offers a wide range of clinical programs, including the Urban Law Clinic (helping seniors with disability, consumer protection, predatory lending, and identity theft issues) and the Immigration Clinic (in which students represent refugees seeking asylum). Students in the Appellate Advocacy Clinic write briefs for indigent clients on appeal (in coordination with the State Appellate Defenders Organization); students in the Mediation Clinic mediate cases in the Oakland

County courts. The School recently began piloting a criminal law clinic, and introduced an Environmental Law Clinic in the 2008 winter term.

As part of the school's commitment both to serving the community and ensuring that law students receive practical training as lawyers while in school, the UDM Law faculty recently voted to require all UDM Law students to participate in either a clinic or an externship while in law school.

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About University of Detroit Mercy School of Law

Founded in 1912, UDM is a Catholic law school sponsored by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. The school is approved by the American Bar Association (ABA) and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools. UDM recently received the prestigious 2006 Judy M. Weightman Award, from the ABA's Student Lawyer Division, in recognition of the school's outstanding public interest programs and contribution to the community. In addition, UDM Law recently was one of five law schools in the nation honored by the *National Jurist* in its January, 2007 issue with a listing on the *National Jurist* Clinical Honor Roll.

Located in the heart of downtown Detroit, the school is within walking distance of federal and state courts, law firms, and the city's municipal centers. The University of Detroit Mercy School of Law is committed to the principles of equal educational opportunity.

For more information about UDM Law, please visit www.law.udmercy.edu or call (313) 596-0200.

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