Carter, Marty team up again to champion children's rights

BY APRIL BOGLE & ELAINE JUSTICE

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and renowned church historian Martin Marty will take the stage again, presenting keynote addresses at the public conference "What's Wrong With Rights for Children?" Oct. 20-21 at the School of Law.

"This event will probe why the United States has chosen not to ratify the United Nations' 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)—the only country other than Somalia not to sign this document," said John Witte, director of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion (CSLR), which is hosting the event.

Carter and Marty return to the stage together as a follow-up to a 2003 CSLR event, titled "What Happens to Children in Peril?" where Carter posed a challenge to the audience. At the forum, which featured a conversation between Carter and Marty, Carter chastised the United States for not signing the CRC, then challenged the audience to address why it has not.

"The CRC was drafted with heavy influence of the United States during the administrations of presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, and it strongly reflects American concerns and interests," said conference co-convenor Jeremy Gunn, director for the Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief at the American Civil Liberties Union and senior fellow in the CSLR. "For almost all countries in the world, the CRC has been relatively uncontroversial. But despite the heavy U.S. influence in the document, ratification of it by the United States immediately became caught up in domestic 'culture wars,' and it was never submitted to the U.S. Senate for ratification.

"Fierce opponents of the CRC asserted that it is an attack on the family and have warned of dramatic consequences if it were to be ratified," Gunn continued. "For many outside the United States, the failure to ratify the CRC is one of the quintessential examples of American hypocrisy and unilateralism."

In addition to presentations and discussions by leading CRC scholars and authorities, conference speakers are charged with developing a recommendation on whether the United States should ratify the CRC in its current form or with revision. Among the speakers:

• Philip Alston, New York University School of Law
• Don Browning, University of Chicago Divinity School
• Cynthia Price Cohen, ChildRights International Research Institute
• Howard Davidson, American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law
• Jaap Doek, Chair, United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
• Martha Albertson Fine, Emory law school
• Martin Guggenheim, New York University School of Law
• Kimberly Jenkins, Emory law school
• Landon Pearson, The Senate of Canada
• Martin Scherr, Campaign for U.S. Ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
• David Smolin, Cumberland School of Law, Samford University
• Johan D. van der Vyver, Emory law school

The event is free and open to the public. Registration is required. Twelve hours of CLE credit are available at the per-hour rate stipulated by each local bar association. For more information, go to www.law.emory.edu/cslr or call 404-712-8710.

The CSLR, one of The Pew Charitable Trusts' Centers of Excellence, explores the intersection of religious traditions and their influence on law, politics and society. Officially renamed the Center for the Study of Law and Religion in September, the CSLR represents the collective programs of Emory's Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion and the Law and Religion Program.