



AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

Defending Liberty, Pursuing Justice

**Oxford-style Intergenerational Debate on
Reforming Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid
at the 2009 Annual Meeting**

Chicago Hyatt Regency Hotel
East Tower, Gold Level, Grand Ballroom B
Saturday, August 1, from 3 to 5 pm

At this year's annual meeting of the American Bar Association, the Senior Lawyers and Young Lawyers Divisions will hold an Oxford-style debate on the reform of federal entitlements programs. With the federal debt exceeding \$11 trillion, and another \$ 45 trillion in unfunded liabilities—chiefly attributable to unsustainable entitlements spending—the looming national debt crisis has profound implications for our country's fiscal and political future, as well as the quality of life for Americans of all ages. Much of the current discussion of "fixes" for the problem focus on the competing interests and perspectives of older and younger Americans, an area made all the more controversial by the vast number of Baby Boomers who will soon be eligible for federal entitlement benefits. With these complex issues surrounding our federal safety net, the resolution before the debaters will be

"Arguably, while Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid may be on fiscally unsustainable courses, it is hereby resolved that it would be unfair to current beneficiaries to increase their taxes or reduce their benefits."

This debate will be "intergenerational" in that one team will be comprised of two older lawyers, former ABA President Robert Grey of Richmond and Judge Ruth Kleinfeld of Manchester, New Hampshire, while the other will be composed of two younger lawyers, Erin Ginsberg, an associate at the Philadelphia firm Schnader Harrison, and Luke Repici, president and executive director of the Association of Young Americans. The moderator will be Bill Robinson of Florence, Kentucky, nominee for ABA president. A spirited debate is expected, especially since, in keeping with the Oxford Union format, the debaters will field questions from the audience.

With the rapidly growing public debt garnering increased public salience, this debate will dovetail with other important initiatives designed to help the public—especially young people—understand the causes and potential consequences of out-of-control spending and, most importantly, help them consider what needs to be done to avert a fiscal crisis. To this end, the Youth Leadership Initiative at the University of Virginia's Center for Politics is partnering with the nonprofit, nonpartisan citizen engagement organization Public Agenda in adapting Public Agenda's Students Face Up to the Nation's Finances, a college-level student engagement curriculum about the dangers of federal fiscal irresponsibility, for use by middle and high school students in classes in over 50,000 schools across the United States. Students will be able to participate in mock campaigns and elections and a mock Congress informed by civics lesson plans that help them understand how taxes, spending, healthcare costs, and the current economic crisis relate to our nation's future. The debate at the annual meeting will shape the lesson plans—and the young minds of the young people who will one day lead our country.

This important project will be made possible with the support of funders who recognize the urgency of entitlements reform to address the ballooning national debt. By more broadly exposing the public, including more than ABA 400,000 lawyers and tens of thousands of students to this pressing issue, the ABA hopes to bring the generations together in finding solutions, insuring that intergenerational equity focuses on sustainability, sharing resources, and spending both humanely and with economic prudence, while meeting the needs of Americans of all ages.