

Bringing A Conservative Buzz to Law Schools

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Quinnipiac Federalist Society sponsors speakers, provokes debate

In 1982, conservative and libertarian law school students and faculty members at Yale, Harvard and the University of Chicago germinated the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies. Today, the group has 10,000 student members, a lawyers division and a substantial number of law professors who challenge what they perceive as a liberal orthodoxy in the nation's law schools.

As a catalyst for debate, Federalist Society events have featured some liberal minded speakers including Harvard professor Alan Dershowitz and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer. In Connecticut, Federalist Society speakers debated the eminent domain case of New London's Suzette Kelo long before it became a U.S. Supreme Court landmark.

At Hamden's Quinnipiac University School of Law, intellectual property law student Cory D. Schug is president of the local chapter. This year it has featured talks by Ilya Shapiro, senior fellow at the Cato Institute; attorney Alan Gura, the trial lawyer in national landmark gun control cases; and Yale Law Professor Roberta Romano, speaking on "Regulating in the Dark," the problems with Congress and world bodies regulating in the midst of economic crises.

Next, on Oct. 25, the group will sponsor Deroy Murdock, a conservative columnist with a message entitled "Three Cheers for the Rich," warning against "class warfare" and advocating low taxes for the wealthy. Schug spoke last week with Senior Writer Thomas B. Scheffey.

LAW TRIBUNE: Your next speaker sounds like a strong counterpoint to the Occupy Wall Street movement. Have you been following that story?

CORY SCHUG: Somewhat. It's a little bit hard to follow their issues, because there's not a 100 percent cohesive platform.

LAW TRIBUNE: What are your objectives this year?

SCHUG: We're trying to get the ideas, and an alternative view that you normally don't hear on campus, out there. The Federalist Society is here to really provoke debate and

have a positive effect speaking on issues of freedom, federalism and judicial restraint. We feel that economic freedom is a big part of the current policy debate in Washington.

LAW TRIBUNE: Is the year leading up to a presidential election an auspicious time for this?

SCHUG: I think every year is a good year. You've got quite a few students that like to make sure that the libertarian and conservative views get voiced on campus when, traditionally, you don't get those views voiced. The Federalist Society is great at getting those ideas put forward.

LAW TRIBUNE: With libertarian Ron Paul in the presidential pack, and the Tea Party, it seems like libertarian arguments are increasingly getting into the public debate.

SCHUG: The Federalist Society is non-partisan, so they don't get behind any one candidate or party, but it's really the ideas for them.

LAW TRIBUNE: What is the lecture "Three Cheers for the Rich" going to be about?

SCHUG: It looks like it's going to be a conversation on the negative aspects of class warfare. The wealthy among us are paying taxes, they are creating jobs, and as the government continues to go after them, it's going to continue to hurt the economy, versus helping the economy.

LAW TRIBUNE: The government going after the rich — how do you see that happening?

SCHUG: You look at the millionaires and billionaires' tax rates, all the quotes of 'redistribute the wealth.' Mr. Murdock will definitely be speaking on a lot of those quotes that have been out there. Entrepreneurs won't feel confident about reinvesting their capital and taking a risk, if the reward is going to be a higher tax rate and taking the proceeds away.

LAW TRIBUNE: We have high unemployment and a dramatic wealth divide now — how are the richest creating jobs these days?

SCHUG: Regardless of whether you agree with the policies coming out of Washington, if you don't have stability, and an expectation of what the situation is going to be in two, three, four or five years, you're not going to put that investment out there. A lot of people, a lot of companies, are holding on to their money. People who are wealthy are not investing right now because they don't know what the political or economic framework is going to be in the next few years. If you had more certainty and policies moving toward economic freedom, versus class warfare, you'd see more of that money coming back in and more development coming from that money.

LAW TRIBUNE: Can we get out of a recession without federal spending?

SCHUG: These are my personal opinions—people within the Federalist Society may disagree, as we do. We debate, and it helps foster new ideas. Federal spending is really just taking money from one person and spending it somewhere else. I don't think there's been a single federal government program that's spent what it said it was going to spend or done what it was going to do. The ability of the federal government to spend money better than entrepreneurs or the individual citizen is greatly overrated.

LAW TRIBUNE: People look at the post-Depression programs with a great deal of positive nostalgia.

SCHUG: There's been a lot of writing on that, really questioning the Keynesian model. In the past 10 to 15 years, at least academically, there's a sense that government spending was not the real savior of the Depression. Everyone sees what was built, but we didn't really come out of the Great Depression until WWII. So you can debate what really got us out of the Depression.

LAW TRIBUNE: Who is your next speaker?

SCHUG: Next semester, we have Dr. Roger Pilon of the Cato Institute who will be speaking about constitutional interpretation. •