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Roger Williams University School of Law

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Newsroom

Groundbreaking Jurist to Keynote Commencement '15

Recently retired Massachusetts Supreme Court Chief Justice Roderick L. Ireland – the court's first African-American justice – will deliver 2015 Commencement address.



BRISTOL, R.I., April 6, 2015 – The Honorable Roderick L. Ireland – the recently retired Massachusetts Supreme Court chief justice who was the first African-American appointed to that court in its 305-year history and who notably voted in favor of same-sex marriage as his state became the first in the nation to legalize it – will deliver the Commencement address and be awarded an honorary degree at the Roger Williams University School of Law ceremony.

“We are extremely proud to welcome Chief Justice Ireland, who is a groundbreaking jurist in so many ways,” said Dean Michael J. Yelnosky. “Under his leadership, the court set the standard on a number of legal issues – not only on the issue of same-sex marriage ruling, but also, just a few months before his retirement, in finding it unconstitutional to sentence teenagers convicted of murder to life in prison without the possibility of parole.”



During the ceremony, the School of Law will also present an honorary degree to acclaimed Providence-based defense attorney Robert B. Mann of Mann & Mitchell.

The law school ceremony will begin at 1 p.m. on Friday, May 15, on the University's main athletic field.

One day later, Roger Williams University will award honorary degrees to National Book Award winner and New York Times bestselling author Nathaniel Philbrick, and to University Trustee and President of Samsung Electronics America Tim Baxter '83 at its Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 16, starting at 10 a.m., also on the University's main athletic field