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Roger Williams University School of Law

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Newsroom

April 15, 2016

Perez to Deliver Commencement Address

U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez will deliver the Commencement address and receive an honorary degree at Commencement ceremonies on Friday, May 13.



- See [WRNI, Rhode Island's NPR](#) on the announcement
- See [Associated Press \(AP\)/WPRO](#) on the announcement

BRISTOL, R.I., APRIL 15, 2016 – U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez will deliver the Commencement address and receive an honorary degree at Roger Williams University School of Law's Commencement ceremony on **Friday, May 13**. The ceremony will begin at **1 p.m.** on the University's main athletic field.

Perez, the former attorney general for civil rights at the U.S. Department of Justice and director of the Office of Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has pioneered efforts to create a living wage for workers and protect workers' retirement savings. He has been mentioned as a possible vice-presidential candidate if Hillary Clinton is the Democratic presidential nominee.

"We are proud to welcome Secretary Perez as our Commencement keynote speaker," said **Dean Michael Yelnosky**. "He has done outstanding work as Secretary on behalf of workers and their families."

In fact, Perez's RWU Law appearance is an encore engagement.

“He graciously agreed to give a lecture here during our annual Pro Bono Celebration week while he was Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice,” Yelnosky said. “On that occasion it was evident that he is a passionate supporter of the law’s promise of equal rights and an inspiring and thoughtful speaker. His work and his message are spectacular examples of one of the deep values of this law school – that it is both an obligation and privilege for lawyers to help the less fortunate and the victimized.”

During Commencement, the School of Law will also present honorary degrees to the **Honorable Haiganush R. Bedrosian**, the retired Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Family Court and first woman to serve in that role; **RWU Professor of Law Anthony J. Santoro**, founding dean of Roger Williams University School of Law and Widener Law School and former President of Roger Williams University; and the **Honorable Michael A. Silverstein**, Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court and member of the Commission on Judicial Tenure and Discipline.

The next day, Saturday, May 14, Roger Williams University will celebrate its undergraduate Commencement. The keynote speaker will be award-winning multimedia artist **Barnaby Evans**, whose stunning, immersive sculpture **WaterFire** has been recognized as an important contribution to the cultural renaissance of downtown Providence and has been re-created in cities around the world. The University will also award an honorary doctorate to **Umberto Crenca**, founding artistic director of **AS220**, the vibrant nonprofit community arts center based in Providence. Visionary architect and planner **William D. Warner**, who died in 2012, and is credited with reimagining the reshaping of downtown Providence, will receive a posthumous honorary doctorate.