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## NEWSRELEASE

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### Debating the Separation of Powers Issue in Rhode Island

**BRISTOL, RI (February 25, 1998):** The question has been asked of the Rhode Island Supreme Court by Governor Lincoln C. Almond -- Does the Rhode Island Constitution prohibit lawmakers and their appointees from serving on state boards and commissions under the separation-of-power provisions?

Though the briefs are not due at the state Supreme Court until May, debate will start on this conflict-of-interest question on Saturday, April 25 when the *Roger Williams University Law Review* sponsors a day-long conference, "SEPARATION OF POWERS IN STATE CONSTITUTIONAL LAW," at the School of Law.

Presenters at the conference will include the following nationally renown legal scholars and political scientists: Professor John M. Devlin, Louisiana State University Law Center; Professor Michael C. Dorf, Columbia University School of Law; Professor James A. Gardner, Western New England College of Law; Professor Richard A. Hogarty, University of Massachusetts, Boston; Professor Robert Schapiro, Emory University School of Law; and Professors Rogan T. Kesh, Suzanne X. Mettler, and Jeffrey M. Stonecash, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University.

Each will address an aspect of the separation of power doctrine in state constitutional law. The moderator will be Professor Robert Williams, Rutgers University School of Law, Camden, one of the nation's leading authorities on state constitutional law.

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Others who have been invited to offer remarks at the conference include: Joseph Larisa, executive counsel to Governor Almond; Professor Jay S. Goodman, attorney and political scientist, Wheaton College; Business Editor Peter Phipps, *Providence Journal Bulletin*; and a representative for the General Assembly.

Current practice permits members of the General Assembly to both write and administer the law. Critics say this severely weakens the system of checks and balances of the constitution. Others maintain that the General Assembly is only asserting power vested in it by the state constitution.

The Rhode Island Ethics Commission has identified more than 140 agencies where the members of the General Assembly or their appointees sit on the board.

“The School of Law hopes to add to the debate on separation of powers by providing a forum for scholars to discuss all sides of this issue,” says Dean John E. Ryan. “It will be a provocative and illuminating symposium as the participants will undoubtedly explore the issue from a variety of perspectives.

“Each spring, the *Roger Williams University Law Review* devotes its entire issue to an annual survey of Rhode Island law. We will continue our focus on Rhode Island law in the fall issue which will publish the papers of the conference presenters. It is our plan that this conference be a continuation of the *Review*’s mission of providing an independent, impartial perspective on the development of the law in Rhode Island.”

The full-day conference is open to the public. A fee of \$20 includes lunch and refreshments. For more information on the conference, contact the School of Law at (401) 254-4652.

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