

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **LONGTIME DONORS ENDOW LGBT FACULTY POSITION AT UCLA**

### **MCDONALD/WRIGHT CHAIR OF LAW IS FIRST ACADEMIC CHAIR EVER DEDICATED TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION LAW**

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LOS ANGELES, CA-February 21, 2007-- The Williams Institute for Sexual Orientation Law & Public Policy announced the endowment of the first academic chair ever dedicated to sexual orientation law and public policy. Philanthropists John McDonald and Rob Wright donated over \$1 million to endow the position at the UCLA School of Law.

The McDonald/Wright Chair of Law will be held by a member of the faculty of UCLA Law and the Williams Institute who has distinguished herself or himself in, and demonstrated a dedicated commitment to, research related to sexual orientation law and public policy or a field that advances the understanding of sexual orientation law and public policy.

"The McDonald/Wright Chair is the first academic chair in the country focusing on sexual orientation law and public policy," said Brad Sears, Executive Director of the Williams Institute. "The Chair will attract new scholars to the Williams Institute and will encourage younger faculty members to pursue their academic interests in sexual orientation issues. It will greatly enhance the work and prestige of the Williams Institute, UCLA Law School, and the entire field of sexual orientation law and public policy. We are deeply indebted to John McDonald and Rob Wright for their generous and visionary gift."

"Winning equality is never quick or easy," said McDonald. "The Williams Institute at UCLA is leading the way in well-reasoned research and education about sexual orientation and the law." "By endowing a chair for this very important mission, our contribution will help turn societal wrongs into civil and human rights," continued Wright. Wright and McDonald were already major donors at Williams, funding the Judicial Education Program for four years. In addition, the pair has an impressive track record of support for numerous lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and HIV organizations nationwide. Most notable among them is the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center, where a building bears the couples' name.

Ever since the first endowed chair was established 500 years ago at Oxford University, privately funded "chairs" have been essential tools for building universities and encouraging research and scholarship in specific academic fields. By providing additional research and other funds, as well as conferring prestige, endowed chairs are a

key tool in attracting and retaining top faculty and developing and conferring legitimacy on new and innovative areas of academic inquiry. Historically, endowed chairs have been used to focus the talents of the best and the brightest on research to cure diseases, develop new technologies, explore the roots of economic problems, and create innovative solutions to pressing social issues.

Wright and McDonald will be honored at a cocktail party following the Williams Institute's 6th Annual Update on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy. The conference, to be held at the UCLA School of Law on February 23, will feature an impressive array of experts in the field of sexual orientation law. A complete schedule can be found here:

<http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/programs/AnnualUpdateProgramInformation.html>

To schedule an interview with Mr. Wright, Mr. McDonald or Mr. Sears, or to obtain press access to the Williams conference on February 23, please contact Syd Peterson at Renna Communications. Photos from the cocktail ceremony, as well as from the conference at large, will be available upon request.

The Williams Institute for Sexual Orientation Law & Public Policy advances law and public policy through rigorous, independent research and scholarship, and disseminates its work through a variety of education programs and media to judges, legislators, lawyers, other policy makers and the public. For more information, please see: <http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute>