

## **Banner Day for Center for U.S. and Mexican Law**

*New Center draws international dignitaries for inaugural event*

**June 4, 2012** – The University of Houston Law Center Friday launched the nation’s first independent research center for the study of the legal relationship between the United States and Mexico with addresses by Mexico’s Ambassador to the U.S., and by a Justice of the Mexican Supreme Court.

Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan spoke at a kickoff luncheon on the challenges and opportunities the two countries face in their ongoing efforts to improve relations. In a morning gathering, Justice José Ramón Cossío Díaz delivered his inaugural lecture as the first “Distinguished Jurist in Residence” at the new Center for U.S. and Mexican Law.

“This center will provide enlightened argument and thoughtful research to the relations of the two countries,” Sarukhan told government officials, dignitaries, business leaders, attorneys, and alumni in a ballroom at the Four Seasons Hotel. He said Mexico’s growing economy will have a tremendous impact on both sides of the border in key areas ranging from immigration and job creation to bi-national business. Opportunities exist, he said, as do major challenges between countries that share a nearly 2,000-mile border. “The United States and Mexico will succeed or fail together,” he said.

In opening remarks, Dean Raymond T. Nimmer called the official launch of the research center “a watershed event in the Law Center’s history,” adding that the school has been rapidly expanding its international presence.

Stephen Zamora, Leonard B. Rosenberg Professor of Law and director of the new center, noted that the Law Center has had a long tradition of offering programs dealing with Mexican law. “We are working to bolster the bridge between the U.S. and Mexico, using Houston’s strategic location and strong ties to Mexico to reinforce cooperation between our two countries,” he said. Zamora termed the center “a think tank, but also a collaborative organization.”

In addition to independent research and analysis of the interplay between the U.S. and Mexican legal systems, the Center also will promote cross-border education of law students, lawyers, judges, and other professionals from both Mexico and Canada. The Center will contract with various agencies to fund specific studies and research projects; will organize periodic symposia; and will participate in collaborative projects to promote cooperation among U.S. and Mexican lawyers, judges and scholars.

Zamora announced two initial research projects, both of a bi-national nature involving researchers from Mexico as well as the United States. The first project will address problems associated with the potentially conflicting national regulation of oil and gas exploration and production in the Gulf of Mexico, a common resource for both countries. The second project addresses the licensing and regulation of cross-border legal services involving Mexican and U.S. lawyers and the services they provide to parties on both sides of the border.

Earlier Friday, Justice Cossío spoke on “Mexico’s Constitution in a Time of Transition” in which he discussed Mexico’s attempts to reform its constitution.

Transformed from an authoritarian, one-party political system to a system where power is divided among various political parties and groups, Mexico has carried out significant legal changes. As a result, Mexican citizens are experiencing increased protection of their civil rights by the Mexican government and the Supreme Court, according to Cossío.

“We can see certain changes in the content and breadth of the rulings, including the development of basic rights for the consolidation of democracy: like the various forms of freedom of speech; the basic rights of the rule of law, like proper search, arrest and defense rules in criminal trials,” Cossío said.

Cossío also expressed the importance of future constitutional reforms. One of the most important symbols of Mexico’s modernity, the Mexican Constitution is the only instrument to progress toward the functions of the ideal state, he said.

“Protection of human rights, economic and social justice, effective integration of minorities, strong democratic process, a solid federal system, effective division of powers, effective and respectable processes of constitutional control, will only come about if we are capable of furthering the understanding of our constitution,” Cossío said.

For more information about the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law, see [www.law.uh.edu/mexican-law/](http://www.law.uh.edu/mexican-law/).

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### **About the University of Houston Law Center**

The University of Houston Law Center is the leading law school in the nation's fifth-largest legal market. Founded in 1947, it is a top-tier institution awarding Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees. The Law Center is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the American Association of Law Schools.