



News Release

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Thomas Jefferson School of Law to Award 216 Legal Degrees at 2012 Spring Commencement

EPA Senior Counsel to Address Graduates

SAN DIEGO – Excitement and anticipation are building as Thomas Jefferson School of Law’s 2012 Spring Commencement nears. Two-hundred-Sixteen students will be awarded legal degrees at TJSL’s graduation ceremony on **Sunday, May 20, 2012**, from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. at Copley Symphony Hall, 1245 Seventh Avenue in downtown San Diego.

The commencement speaker will be Barry E. Hill, Senior Counsel for Environmental Governance of the Office of International and Tribal Affairs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Hill has had a distinguished career as an attorney practicing environmental law and is a well-known advocate for environmental justice.

The class valedictorian is Noah Wald, *Summa Cum Laude*. A graduate of Full Sail University, Wald is a member of the *Thomas Jefferson Law Review*, a recipient of the Witkin Award of Excellence, and is listed in *Who’s Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges* for 2012.

Of the graduates, 195 will be awarded *Juris Doctor* degrees; 20 will be receiving LL.M. (*Master of Laws*) degrees; and TJSL will be awarding its first J.S.M. (*Master of Science of Law*) degree.

Other noteworthy graduates include: Michelle Bos and Nancy Astifo, both winners of the Charles T. Bumer Civil Libertarian Award; Justin Heim and Daniel Nguyen, both members of the TJSL Baseball Arbitration Team that won first place at the national championship in 2012; and Elizabeth Knowles, a law review member, who is the 2011 recipient of the Lawyers Club of San Diego Women and the Law Project Scholarship at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, and also the winner of numerous awards and other scholarships during her time at TJSL. She is listed too, in *Who’s Who in American Universities and Colleges* for 2012.

It’s a “family affair” for the husband and wife team of Ryan Ciriaco and Samantha Ciriaco, *Magna Cum Laude*, who will be graduating together, and for Kevin Bergt, whose wife RuthAnne is going into her third year at TJSL and whose brother Patrick graduated from TJSL in 2009.

A reception at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, 1155 Island Ave., San Diego, CA 92101, will immediately follow the graduation ceremony.

Thomas Jefferson School of Law, which moved into a new, environmentally-friendly, state-of-the-art downtown campus in January 2011, is a private, independent, non-profit law school that is accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS).

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Note to Editors: This is an invitation-only event and media coverage is welcome.

More on Commencement Speaker, Barry E. Hill:

Barry E. Hill is a scholar, teacher, public servant, and advocate for environmental justice. He has held senior level positions as a manager and an attorney in the public and private sectors. He is currently the Senior Counsel for Environmental Governance of the Office of International and Tribal Affairs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Prior to assuming that position, he was the Director of the Agency's Office of Environmental Justice. Before moving to EPA, he was the Associate Solicitor, Division of Conservation and Wildlife, as well as the Director of the Office of Hearings and Appeals at the Department of the Interior. Before taking the Interior posts, he was Of Counsel at the law firm of Dickstein Shapiro, LLP where he practiced environmental law. Prior to joining the law firm, he was a Project Manager in the Superfund Business Unit of ICF International, an environmental consulting firm. Prior positions include Special Counsel to the Attorney General of the District of Columbia; Legal Counsel to the Inspector General of EPA; Law Secretary to the Deputy Administrative Judge of New York City, Criminal Division; and Assistant District Attorney of Kings County, Brooklyn.

Professor Hill authored the law school textbook, *Environmental Justice: Legal Theory and Practice*, and has authored/co-authored numerous articles on environmental law and policy, and environmental justice in scholarly and professional journals. He has taught environmental justice and sustainable development at the Vermont Law School for more than 15 years, and political science at several universities.

In 2001, he was awarded the American Bar Association's "Award for Distinguished Achievement in Environmental Law and Policy" for his work, teaching, and research in the areas of environmental justice, and environmental law and policy. He earned a B.A. degree in Political Science from Brooklyn College, and a M.A. degree in Political Science from Howard University. He received a J.D. from the Cornell University Law School.