

# Marquette University: Marquette Law School to host Barrock Lecture on Criminal Law, conversation with prosecutors on Nov. 15

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MILWAUKEE — Carissa Byrne Hessick, professor of law at the University of North Carolina, will deliver Marquette University Law School's Barrock Lecture on Criminal Law on Tuesday, Nov. 15, at 4:30 p.m. at Eckstein Hall, 1215 W. Michigan St.

In a separate event the same day, Marquette Law School Professor Michael M. O'Hear will moderate a lunchtime conversation at 12:15 p.m. featuring Hessick and three current or former district attorneys in Wisconsin, including Milwaukee County D.A. John Chisholm. The session is titled "Prosecutors and Politics: A Conversation about—and with—District Attorneys."

Registration for both events is required. Media interested in attending either event should contact Kevin Conway, associate director of university communication, at [kevin.m.conway@marquette.edu](mailto:kevin.m.conway@marquette.edu).

For the Barrock Lecture, Hessick — who is the Anne Shea Ransdell and William Garland "Buck" Ransdell, Jr. Distinguished Professor of Law at UNC — will present "Democracy in the Criminal Justice System: An Assessment." In theory, the American system of criminal justice is highly democratic: Whether by empaneling juries and grand juries, electing local prosecutors and sheriffs, or constantly revising criminal statutes, the United States gives its citizens significant input into not just general criminal justice policy but even outcomes in specific cases. In practice, though, matters are quite different: Vanishingly few criminal cases go to trial; most prosecutors and sheriffs run for office unopposed; and when they are asked to vote,

most Americans are uninformed or misinformed about even the most basic criminal justice issues.

The lecture will suggest that we can improve this bleak picture of criminal justice democracy—but only with a significant investment of time and attention from both the legal community and the larger society.

Hessick serves as director of the UNC's Prosecutors and Politics Project. Her teaching and research interests are concentrated in criminal law, the structure of the criminal justice system, and criminal sentencing, and she has taught and written extensively in these spheres. Hessick holds a J.D. from Yale University and a B.A. from Columbia University. Before entering teaching, she practiced law and clerked for Hon. Barbara S. Jones (S.D.N.Y.) and Hon. A. Raymond Randolph (D.C. Cir.).

The Barrock Lecture is supported by a bequest of the late Mary Barrock Bonfield to honor her parents, George and Margaret Barrock. George Barrock was a 1931 graduate of the Law School.

### **Prosecutors and Politics: A Conversation about—and with—District Attorneys**

District attorneys are lawyers, but in Wisconsin and most other states, they are also elected officials, which can give a political character to their role. In recent years, the political dimension of prosecution has received greater attention in a few big cities with the advent of the “progressive prosecutor” phenomenon. In all events, the question as to how politics intersect with prosecution is of undoubted importance, given the central role of the prosecutor in the American criminal justice system.

Few researchers have explored this question as extensively as Hessick. Recent reports by the UNC Prosecutors and Politics Project have focused on such topics as campaign contributions in prosecutor elections, lobbying by prosecutors, and electoral challenges to incumbent prosecutors. Hessick will present some of her latest research and be joined for comments by Chisholm, Marathon County District Attorney Theresa Wetzsteon, and Christian Gossett, former district attorney for Winnebago County.

### **About Marquette University Law School**

Through public programming such as the Marquette Law School Poll, “On the Issues” conversations with newsmakers, public lectures by leading scholars, conferences on issues of public significance, and the work of its Lubar Center for Public Policy Research and Civic Education, Marquette Law School serves as an important venue in this region for civil discourse about law and public policy matters.

### **About Marquette University**

Marquette University is a Catholic, Jesuit university located near the heart of downtown Milwaukee that offers a comprehensive range of majors in 11 nationally and internationally recognized colleges and schools. Through the formation of hearts and minds, Marquette prepares our 11,100 undergraduate, graduate, doctoral and professional students to lead, excel and serve as agents of positive change. And, we deliver results. Ranked in the top 20% of national universities, Marquette is recognized for its undergraduate teaching, innovation and career preparation as the sixth-best university in the country for job placement. Our focus on student success and immersive, personalized learning experiences encourages students to think critically and engage with the world around them. When students graduate with a Marquette degree, they are truly prepared and called to Be The Difference.