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## Message from the Dean

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## The Most Critical Legal Leadership

Who would have guessed that Americans would be discussing credit default swaps over the breakfast table?

I am struck by how many of today's major global and national issues hinge on serious legal considerations. Complex issues of law have extended beyond the boundaries of conversations among attorneys or politicians to become page one, above-the-fold headlines: The potential for criminal liability in the aftermath of the BP oil spill; the balance of states' rights in the hot-button issues of gun control and immigration; the ins and outs of bankruptcy in the auto industry bailout debate.

Alexis de Tocqueville famously said that "there is hardly a political question in the United States which does not sooner or later turn into a judicial one." Well, the 19<sup>th</sup> century political thinker may have cast the point too narrowly; legal implications permeate wide swaths of public debate and discourse, not just the political sphere. This makes for a remarkable



and lively time to study the rule of law, consider policy development, and practice law in a global context.

As complex legal and financial issues have taken center stage in our national dialogue, I have watched an interesting dynamic emerge: The media are reaching out to Michigan Law faculty in droves. Newspaper, television, radio, and web-based media outlets have tapped our legal experts for serious, critical analysis and for the translation of legal tenets into a layperson's language.

For years cable news networks have featured legal talking heads on the sensational issues and criminal trials that make the news. We've all heard plenty of analysis on Bernie Madoff's shocking Ponzi scheme or of famous trial moments such as, "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit." But it seems that these days there is an enormous volume and breadth of inquiry from the media as they attempt to dive into multi-pronged and sensitive issues cutting across public,



corporate, criminal, and civil issues: bankruptcy, corporate criminal liability and settlements, tax law, health care law, environmental policy, international corporate law, voting rights, national security, and the like.

If you read our monthly e-newsletter, *Amicus*, you get a good sense of the breadth and depth of topics and media outlets in which Michigan Law faculty members are asked for critical analysis—from *The New York Times* to the *International Herald Tribune*, from huffingtonpost.com and Slate.com to the *National Review*. I believe our faculty fulfill an important public service in their efforts to help the public understand legal concepts that influence policy development and encourage an informed debate.

I hope you will spend some time with this issue of *Law Quadrangle*. You'll read more about the emerging debate over gun control on college campuses, reflect on Michigan Law's historic influence in tax law, and hear from Professors David Uhlmann and Ted Parson about the potential criminal liabilities and new energy strategies that could result from the Gulf oil spill.

Perhaps, in these times, it is more important than ever that our Law School is distinguished in its capacity for theoretical insight

and scholarship, but also deeply engaged with the challenging questions our lawmakers and citizens face each day. Michigan Law has long been known for this balance between leading scholarship and the well-honed skills of legal practice in the real world; in the days ahead we will focus even more effort on skills-based opportunities for our students who will take their legal knowledge into an increasingly complex global society.

Michigan Law is providing legal leadership of the most critical nature.

Sincerely,



Evan Caminker

(By the way, if you haven't opened our *Amicus* e-mails, I hope you will click on the next issue we send to you via e-mail, due in November. We have spent considerable time refreshing our alumni communications—both this magazine and our relatively new e-newsletter—over the past two years. The stories and images are engaging and capture interesting aspects of the legal landscape as well Michigan Law's unique contributions.)

