

## Announcing the Lubar Center for Public Policy Research and Civic Education

Early in my deanship, I gave a speech questioning the tendency of some institutions to support specific political, economic, or social policies that seem by any measure to be beyond the expertise, purpose, or purview of the particular institutions. That was some time ago (my remarks appeared in the Summer 2004 issue of this magazine), but I have maintained the view. For example, it is partly on its basis that, as dean, I rarely take a public position on proposed legislation. Marquette University Law School is a venue more than a litigant—a forum more than a contestant.



Michael R. Lovell, Sheldon B. Lubar, and Joseph D. Kearney

It is scarcely coincidental that, during this time, Marquette Law School has become, in the characterization of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, “Milwaukee’s public square.” To be sure, this is not our *fundamental* purpose: *that* is to help men and

women form themselves into Marquette lawyers. But through public programming such as the Marquette Law School Poll, debates featuring candidates in significant political races, Mike Gousha’s “On the Issues” conversations with newsmakers, public lectures by leading scholars, and conferences on significant issues of public importance, Marquette Law School serves as the region’s leading venue for serious civil discourse about law and public policy matters. Eckstein Hall increasingly has become the place where the community takes the hard problems, the ones that affect us all.

We can do this, in large part, because of numerous donors, who—in addition to supporting scholarships for students, research by faculty, and summer fellowships through our Public Interest Law Society—have underwritten our public policy initiative, as we have come to call it, primarily through their support of our annual fund. In this regard, no donors have been more generous than

Sheldon and Marianne Lubar, beginning with their seven-figure gift in 2010. More recently—indeed, since this magazine was in page proofs and with the support of another such gift—we have announced the creation of the Lubar Center for Public Policy Research and Civic Education. An endowment of \$7 million will support this project.

Marquette Law School’s Lubar Center will sponsor research, support journalism projects, and underwrite partnerships with other institutions whose exploration of public policy topics contributes to the common good. Some of these projects will result in specific proposals or reflect particular worldviews, even though the Lubar Center itself—like the Law School more generally—will maintain no position. We scarcely expect a lawyer or academic presenting at Marquette University Law School to represent no cause or make no suggestion. In all events, regardless of the particular topic, as the history of our public policy initiative convincingly demonstrates, it is possible to share passionate views in a dispassionate setting that receives all reasoned views reasonably expressed. All this will be among the key roles of the Lubar Center.

The Lubar Center for Public Policy Research and Civic Education is a concept and an institution, but it also will be a place. We have renamed the Appellate Courtroom in Eckstein Hall as the “Lubar Center.” This magnificent room, flanked by portraits of Marquette lawyers and faculty who have served on state supreme courts or federal courts of appeals, has become *the* place in which not just moot court arguments but, more frequently, distinguished lectures, “On the Issues with Mike Gousha” conversations, policy conferences, political debates, and other large-scale forms of public discussion and education unfold.

We will have occasion in the next issue of this magazine to celebrate this gift and explore its significance. Meanwhile, on behalf of Michael R. Lovell, president of Marquette University, and Daniel J. Myers, our provost, as well as the entire Marquette Law School community, permit me to thank the Lubars for their confidence in us. We look forward to realizing our collective ambition.

Joseph D. Kearney  
*Dean and Professor of Law*