



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

School of Law

The Year in Review 2017

Engaging the Law to Support **Sustainability** on Earth ■ Environmental and Natural Resources Law at the University of Oregon

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A Voice for the Environment

Professor and public lands advocate Marcilynn Burke to lead School of Law

For an institution that's always had a deep green streak running through it, the University of Oregon would be hard-pressed to find a better fit than Marcilynn Burke to take the helm of its Law School. Much of Burke's career has been tied toward environmental law, starting from her graduation from Yale Law School up through her leadership roles at the University of Houston Law Center and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

That background dovetails perfectly with a school whose Environmental and Natural Resources Law Center is ranked 12th in the nation that she will now lead.

"Marcilynn Burke is an accomplished leader and we are proud that she is with us at UO," said Jayanth Banavar, UO provost and senior vice president. "As dean, her experience and leadership will combine with her legal expertise to create the synergies that will elevate the exemplary work of our law school's accomplished faculty."

Burke graduated from Yale Law School in 1995, having served as editor for both the Yale Journal of Law and Feminism and the Yale Journal of International Law. After clerking for a federal judge and working in private practice, she joined the faculty of the University of Houston Law Center in 2002. Once there, she served as a co-director of the Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Center, and was lead faculty editor for the Environment and Energy Law and Policy Journal, in addition to teaching courses in property, land use, and natural resources law.

But from 2009 to 2013, Burke stepped away from academia after being called by the Obama administration to serve in the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management. As the

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ENR Giving Opportunities

Private gifts are an essential means of supporting the ENR Center.

Recently, private donations have allowed us to expand support for students committed to public interest environmental law. In addition to providing funded fellowships for law students that offset the cost of law school tuition, ENR now offers funded post-graduate fellowships and summer stipends for law students interested in pursuing public interest environmental work during the summer following their first year of law school.

To learn more about giving opportunities and how you can help Oregon's next generation

of environmental lawyers, please visit law.uoregon.edu/explore/invest-in-ENR



deputy director for programs and policy, she helped lead policy development for in energy, mining, grazing, recreation, and conservation.. President Obama later named her Assistant Secretary-Designate for Land and Minerals Management Interior, overseeing four bureaus, with more than 12,000 employees and budgets in excess of \$1.7 billion. In that role she helped craft policies for management of federal public lands and the Outer Continental Shelf, and was responsible for the regulation of coal .

“Oregon Law is nationally recognized for its exceptional leadership in the field of environmental law,” said Dean Burke. “Its commitment to innovative approaches to legal education, applied interdisciplinary research, and public service aligns perfectly with my professional experiences and interests.” “I am thrilled to be joining its faculty.”

Burke returned to her professorship at Houston in 2013 and later would be named associate dean before accepting the UO's offer to lead its School of Law earlier this year. But there's more to Burke than her work.

She wowed the crowd at a law conference earlier this year by opening her talk with her own rendition of Woody Guthrie's “This Land is My Land,” and once settled, Burke hopes to find a gospel choir to sing with.

“I've always sung in a church choir or a community choir,” she said.

Burke, who earned her bachelor's degree in international studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, still sports a soft spot for her beloved Tar Heels basketball teams. However, she now wears at least some green and yellow on a daily basis, and already has plans to attend games at Autzen Stadium and Matt Knight Arena.

One thing that emerges instantly upon meeting Burke is her approachability and warm spirit. Those qualities and her ability to capture the attention of a classroom prompted the University of Houston Law Center's Black Law Students Association to award her professor of the year honors in 2013.

The new dean and Dave Frohnmayer Chair in Leadership and Law is eager to showcase those traits as well as the vision, creativity, and leadership experience she has honed in her 22-year legal career.

“With a new dean there's always excitement and hope, and talking with members of the faculty and staff gives me energy as well,” Burke says. “I'm excited to be the first black female dean of the law school and to have the opportunity to help make a great school even better.” ■

—By Alice Tallmadge, with contributions by Sharleen Nelson and Jim Murez