

For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

**LOYOLA PARTNERS WITH DISTINGUISHED CONGRESSMAN TO LAUNCH  
THE COELHO CENTER FOR DISABILITY LAW, POLICY & INNOVATION**

***ONLY ORGANIZATION OF ITS KIND AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY IN U.S.  
& ONLY ONE HOUSED AT TOP LAW SCHOOL***

**LOS ANGELES** – Loyola Law School, Los Angeles at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) will launch **The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy & Innovation** on Monday, Nov. 5, 2018 with a gala event and inaugural symposium announcing the details of its newly commissioned poll tracking the electoral involvement of people with disabilities. Founded by former Democratic congressman, disability rights icon and LMU alumnus Hon. Tony Coelho (LMU '64), The Coelho Center is the only organization of its kind at a Catholic university in America and the only one housed at a top U.S. law school.

The Coelho Center will pursue a unique three-pronged mission: convening thought leaders to pursue positive change on disability issues; leveraging technology to advance the lives of people with disabilities; and creating a pipeline of lawyers with disabilities to populate the bench and hold elected office. To be housed at Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, The Coelho Center also will draw on multiple areas of expertise from each of the other six LMU colleges.

The interdisciplinary Center debuts with nearly \$5 million in contributions, including \$1 million from the Coelho family. Coelho, the architect of the groundbreaking Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), also has donated his impressive collection of legislative papers and other documents to LMU's William H. Hannon Library.

The former House Majority Whip (the third-highest position in the U.S. House of Representatives), Coelho has been a key advocate for those with disabilities over his entire adult life. As the driving force behind the ADA, he was later appointed by President Bill Clinton to serve on the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. Coelho has held leadership positions at the American Association for People with Disabilities, the Epilepsy Foundation and the Partnership to Improve Patient Care.

"I have spent most of my life advocating on behalf of those of us with disabilities. Simply put, it is my ministry," said Coelho. "I decided to establish The Coelho Center at Loyola Law School at Loyola Marymount University because of their focus on access to justice for all, including those with disabilities. LMU is also my alma mater – the place where I learned I had epilepsy – and they supported and encouraged me at a critical crossroads in my life. The Coelho Center will be a means to convene like-minded advocates. Along with the donation of my papers to the university's Hannon Library, I hope The Center provides the tools for those who will continue the fight into the future."

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Michael Waterstone, Fritz B. Burns Dean of Loyola Law School and senior vice president of LMU, echoed Coelho's sentiment. "As a lifelong scholar and advocate on disability law issues, I couldn't be more proud to house a center with the same dedication on the Loyola Law School campus," he said. "I am thrilled that Loyola will be a part of the international dialogue on such important issues of fairness in our society."

**The Coelho Center's inaugural symposium, "Disability Impact: Breaking Through Barriers to Civic Leadership," will examine disability as a driver of innovation, empowering those with disabilities to engage with their communities.** "This symposium rejects the idea of disability as a 'problem' inherent in an individual and in need of intervention," said Katherine Perez, The Coelho Center's founding director. "When it comes to technological and other advances, our symposium will look at disability as a solution, not a problem."

The Nov. 5 symposium, to be held at LMU's Silicon Beach campus and funded in part by The California Endowment, will feature the lunchtime keynote address, "The Disability Community, the Election and the Next Congress." Delivered by David Mermin, partner, Lake Research Partners, it will outline a poll commissioned by The Coelho Center to study the electoral habits of people with disabilities. Afterward, a series of experts will anchor two panels: "Disabled Makers & Inventors: Agency in the Advancement of Disability Rights in Technology" and "Conquering Stigma: Representations of Disability in Media and Entertainment."

"The Coelho Center will provide a much-needed multi-disciplinary approach that ensures students and faculty from different fields work collaboratively with disabled community leaders to fight for equality and justice," said Judith E. Heumann, a symposium panelist who served as special advisor for international disability rights at the U.S. Department of State. "The Coelho Center will provide the knowledge and tools to advance the civil and human rights of disabled people in the U.S. and around the world."

The Coelho Gala, to be held on LMU's campus, will include welcome remarks by LMU President Dr. Timothy Law Snyder, Ph.D. The invitation-only dinner will be emceed by actress Lynda Carter and her husband Robert A. Altman, CEO, ZeniMax Media Inc.

Details about The Coelho Center, including event agendas and how to become involved, are available at [www.lls.edu/coelhocenter](http://www.lls.edu/coelhocenter).

### **About Loyola Law School, Los Angeles**

Located on an award-winning Frank Gehry-designed campus in downtown Los Angeles, Loyola Law School is home to prominent faculty, dedicated students and cutting-edge programs. The Law School strives to instill in students the knowledge they need to excel on their chosen paths. It dedicates itself to preparing students for the rigors of practice with an extensive portfolio of practical-training opportunities, an 18,000-strong alumni network and a focus on social justice. Learn more at [www.lls.edu](http://www.lls.edu).

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### **Media contacts:**

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