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SYMPOSIUM ON EQUALITY: SCHOLARS AND PRACTITIONERS GATHER TO HONOR THE CAREER OF A VISIONARY LEGAL SERVICE LAWYER AND TO THINK OUT LOUD ABOUT STRATEGIES FOR THE NEXT 30 YEARS.

PHILADELPHIA, PA: The Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia (PILCOP) announced today that it will be conducting a series of symposia on May 14, 2008 on the topic of equality as part of a day-long celebration of the 41-year career of Thomas K. Gilhool, a visionary lawyer and member of the first generation of legal service lawyers. The speakers, scholars and practitioners from around the country, will gather in Philadelphia to fashion new strategies for securing such basic needs as income, health care and education. They will explore the powerful tools of litigation, policy, advocacy and international law as tools in rebuilding the consensus and progress of earlier generations. Drew S. Days, III, former Solicitor General will give the keynote address on the role of the courts in enforcing federal laws.

Gilhool spent most of his 41 years as Chief Counsel of the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia. He developed and refined his innovative approach to systemic change during his 27 years as counsel and chief counsel of the Public Interest Law Center (1975-1986; 1990-2006). Before he began to work at the Law Center, Gilhool was a member of the originating generation of legal service lawyers, writing the briefs in support of the establishment of Philadelphia's Community Legal Services and serving as Consumer Advocate and director of law reform at Community Legal Services, Inc. during the late 1960s. In that capacity, he argued and won the first legal services case which reached the United States Supreme Court, in which the Court struck down a

requirement that applicants for public assistance reside in a state for a stated period of time.

Gilhool helped to organize, train and then represented the Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization and the Residents Advisory Board as well as other low-income neighborhood organizations. The recognition agreements which he created empowered those organizations to effectively represent welfare recipients and public housing tenants and served as models and were replicated throughout the country.

During these formative years for the legal services community, Tom played a significant role on a national level. He was Chair of the Law Reform committee of the National Project Advisory Group, a member of the National Advisory Committee on Legal Services to the Poor, U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity and a member of the working group which established the Legal Services Corporation. In 1971-72, Gilhool was a founding co-director of the National Legal Services Training Program a national program which trained legal services lawyers.

Throughout his life, Gilhool shared the insights of his rich and varied career with others through education. During the years 1987-1989, he served as Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania under Governor Robert P. Casey (the only Philadelphian ever to hold that post). While Secretary, Gilhool's initiatives focused on quality and performance including the publication of school-by-school performance reports (Pennsylvania was the first large state to do so); establishing money awards for strong gains in performance (the first state to do so) and changing the funding formula for educating children with disabilities to encourage integration of such children. Gilhool also shared and learned through teaching: a year (1990) as an eighth grade

teacher at the Roberts Vaux Middle School located in an inner-city, high-poverty section of the city of Philadelphia; three years as a tenured law professor at the University of Southern California Law Center (where he also founded in Los Angeles the Western Center of Law and Handicapped); and throughout the years in courses at LaSalle College, Temple University, University of Pennsylvania and St. Joseph's University on courses which included "Poverty, Distribution and the Law", "Reorganization of the City: Neighborhood, Decentralization and City Services"; and "Social Ethics: Distribution, Equality and Democracy."

In 2003 Gilhool received a Senior Fulbright Fellowship in Japan, followed by a meeting in New York in August 2004, for the purpose of bringing together Japanese and American advocates for disability rights to consider how each country can build on the successes of the other and how they could contribute to a United Nations meeting to draft a convention on rights of persons with disabilities. Subsequently, he participated in that drafting session.

Gilhool has been honored repeatedly throughout his career. In 2007, he received the Philadelphia Bar Association's coveted Andrew Hamilton Award. He has received awards from the American Academy of Pediatrics (the President's Award for Outstanding Service), the Citizen's Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia (the John N. Patterson Award for Excellence in Public Education), the City University of New York National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (the Inclusion Champion Award), the United Cerebral Palsy Association (National Service Award), the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (the Ned Wolf Award, named in honor

of the founder of PILCOP), and the Society for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics.

An honorary degree citation for Gilhool last year at Syracuse University praised his work: “You have fashioned monumental shifts in law that have engendered change in the nation’s conscience, thereby improving the lives of millions of children, their families and their communities. Your groundbreaking work continues to shine the light of truth into dark corners of our society in which persons with disabilities are still denied their basic human rights.”

Jennifer R. Clarke, the current Executive Director for the Public Interest Law Center said that the daylong event is intended to begin a serious conversation about the issues about which Gilhool cared deeply, but which politicians and the press often ignore: “When Tom first suggested that we talk about a right to a decent income; my first reaction was that no one discusses these issues anymore. My second reaction was: ‘of course’! That is exactly why we should talk about them. That is exactly the type of genius that Tom has always brought to the table.”

The Public Interest Law Center originated as the Philadelphia affiliate of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, to address systematic discrimination and violence against African Americans. In 1974, the Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association incorporated the Law Center to ensure the continuation of its effective, powerful work with full-time experienced civil rights lawyers. Today, the Law Center addresses the Constitutional promise of equal citizenship to all persons irrespective of race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, gender or poverty.

The symposia will be held at the Arch Street Meeting House, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and the celebration will be held at the Downtown Club. For tickets, the symposium program and more information see www.pilcop.org or contact Lauren Mirowitz at lmirowitz@pilcop.org; 215-627-7100. A symposium program is attached.