

# *Advise* & **Dissent**

where the Supreme Court and politics collide

Film directed and  
produced by  
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Engagement Campaign  
Produced by

ACTIVE  
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**Lumiere**  
PRODUCTIONS INC.

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## **FIRST MONDAY LAUNCH** EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

For the first time, ***Advise & Dissent*** goes behind the lines and into the trenches of the Supreme Court confirmation wars. With unprecedented access to senators and lobbyists, the film chronicles the collision of politics and justice in the Roberts, Miers and Alito battles. SCOTUSblog recently called it “a fascinating, balanced inside look at the stakes and strategies of the confirmation wars.”

The *First Monday Launch* is a series of screenings of ***Advise & Dissent*** at many of the nation's top law schools. The events will take place October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010, with screenings followed by discussions of the issues raised in the film. This initiative is designed as a first step toward engaging the public in fixing a confirmation process widely seen as dysfunctional, and toward encouraging wide-ranging discussion about judicial philosophy.

### **Framing The Debate**

When the Senate ceases to engage nominees in meaningful discussion of legal issues, the confirmation process takes on an air of vacuity and farce, and the Senate becomes incapable of either properly evaluating nominees or appropriately educating the public.

– *Elena Kagan*

***Advise & Dissent*** has proven an excellent catalyst for in-depth discussion; and a way to engage law scholars and students in exploring long-term, systemic issues and their solutions.

Discussion leaders can help put the film in context, for example, by providing a historical perspective or by comparing the Bush-era battles with more recent confirmations. To get the post-screening conversation going, it might be helpful to pose an initial question or two inspired by the film. For example, does the confirmation process need reform? If so, how would one go about it? Or, should senators demand more meaningful discussion of legal issues, or will that compromise nominees' judicial independence and further politicize the judiciary? Indeed, should confirmation be an openly political process, or should it somehow transcend politics?

Whether structured as a panel discussion, two-way debate or colloquium, it's good to have a range of perspectives represented. Try not to invite more than five people (including a moderator) to participate in a panel, and remember to leave ample time for the audience to participate.

We encourage all *First Monday Launch* attendees to read Elena Kagan's article, "Confirmation Messes, Old and New," and "Selecting Supreme Court Justices: A Dialogue," prior to the October 4<sup>th</sup> screening (see attached).

## Getting Started With Your Event

**Determine Venue Options and Make Sure You Have The Proper A/V Equipment:** Remember to do a tech check in advance and preview your *Advise & Dissent* DVD on the equipment you will be using the day of your event. Make sure you have speakers to amplify the sound and a supply of extension cords.

**Distribute Materials and Resources:** Present audience members with fact sheets, articles and other relevant materials. Organizations like the American Constitution Society and the Federalist Society have helpful resources on their websites that are available for easy download.

**Attendee Sign-In:** No matter what format your event takes, make sure to have a system for collecting email addresses at your event, and follow up with audience members in the days after. You've worked too hard to let those relationships disappear!

## Getting The Word Out

Getting the word out is one of the most important parts of your planning. Even a well-thought-out event with prominent speakers can suffer low attendance if you don't cover your bases. You can download flyer and press release templates, images and other resources at: <http://drop.io/adviseanddissent>, password: advise.

**Nail Down The Details:** Confirm the exact time, location, venue and ticketing/RSVP procedure before you send out notices to anyone. (If you're taking RSVPs, plan to accept 30% more RSVPs than you have room for and let late responders know you might be able to squeeze them in if people earlier on the list don't show.) And, as a nod to your partner organizations, include a mention of them in all of your outreach.

**Hit The Inboxes:** The simplest thing you can do to promote your event is to create an email blast and send it out widely via your listserv and those of your partners. Send out two emails: the first at least one week before your event, and then a reminder several days before.

**Use Social Media:** You can also create a Facebook event and invite all your friends, and encourage them also to invite their friends. Continuously update your Facebook status with short notes and link to the event page so that it will appear in your friends' newsfeed. Send out a reminder message via Facebook to all confirmed and undecided attendees at least one week prior to the event. If you have a Twitter account and a following, Tweet about the event as well - you can use free URL shortening applications, such as <http://bit.ly> - to link to the Facebook event page.

**Get It On Community Calendars:** Try to get calendar listings in your city's weekly publication(s) and on the web. Make sure to post information about the *First Monday Launch* on your law school's website and ask any partner organizations to do the same.

**Post Flyers:** Make flyers and post them in high traffic areas, such as the law library, dormitories, hallways and the student union.

**Start The Presses:** Ten days before your event, send a press release to local newspapers. Try to target reporters covering the legal affairs, and remember to include a few quotes in your press release from the great press coverage the film has already generated.

**Remember to take digital photos! (and video, if possible)**

