New political regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought opportunities for rule of law reform and concomitant challenges. While both countries have passed new constitutions, promulgated new codes and built or rebuilt legal institutions, there are many issues still to be addressed. Some of the challenges are structural in nature: each country faces a shortage of trained legal professionals, insufficient oversight mechanisms, and lack of awareness about law and rights. But the challenges go far beyond capacity building needs. How will legal cultural and traditional adjudication mechanisms shape and be shaped by the reforms initiated in recent years? What specific constitutional challenges might each country expect to face in the next decade? Can legal reform take root amidst ongoing violence and political instability? Which people or institutions might emerge as the keepers of the legal conscience in these new polities? What is the role of Islam in the Iraqi and Afghan legal system?

The University of Pennsylvania Law School and the National Constitution Center will host a conference to explore the challenges that face rule of law reform in Iraq and Afghanistan and identify issues for the rule of law to take hold. The intensive agenda will not only shed light upon vital issues, but will discuss strategies for addressing obstacles.

Confirmed participants include Senator Robert P. Casey (D-PA), the Honorable Syed Tayib Jawad, Ambassador of Afghanistan to the United States, Professor Feisal al-Istrabadi, former Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations, Rend Al-Rahim, former Iraqi Ambassador to the United States, and Brigadier General Thomas Ayres, Assistant Judge Advocate General for Military Law and Operations, U.S. Army. For a complete agenda and to register, please visit http://www.law.upenn.edu/international/conferences/ruleoflaw/. Please RSVP online by Thursday, September 16, 2010.