



World Affairs Council of Maine

Press Release

For Immediate Release

January 5, 2009

Immigrant and Refugee Community Discusses Life in Maine

Many refugees and immigrants have been forced to abandon their native country and have come to call Maine, especially the Greater Portland area, home. Attorney Jeff Thaler of the law offices of Bernstein Shur and member of World Affairs Council of Maine will facilitate a panel of refugees and immigrants. The panel will tell stories of their native country and experiences here in Maine with a goal of expanding both cultural and community understanding of these new Maine communities. The World Affairs Council of Maine will host this event at King Middle School at 92 Deering Avenue in Portland on January 22nd, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.

The panelist will discuss the condition and culture of their native countries, their personal journey, and their resettlement to America and Maine. Audience participation and dialogue will be encouraged.

Jeff Thaler, moderator of the event is an attorney at Bernstein Shur in Portland and has recently developed and directed a program for Massachusetts-based Williams College called "*Resettling Refugees in Maine*". This program enables Williams College students to come to Maine and have a home stay with a refugee or immigrant families. This course was first developed in January of 2008, and is being offered for the second time again this month. Thaler also helped to create and teach a course at University of Southern Maine entitled "*The Refugee Experience: from There to Here*". This course will be co-taught with Professor Lynn Kuzma, chair of USM's Political Science Department, and Reza Jalali, coordinator of Multicultural Student Affairs at USM.

Thaler is also a senior member of Bernstein Shur's Energy, Environmental, and Litigation Practice Groups and has been recognized by Best Lawyers in America for his work in environmental and natural resources law, commercial litigation, and by Chambers USA for his environmental and litigation practices.

The World Affairs Council of Maine is in its 31th year as the state's oldest and largest private organization dedicated to public education and international affairs. Founded in 1977 the Council promotes the understanding of international events, cultures, and foreign policy. The council's offices are located on the Portland campus of the University of Southern Maine.

For more information regarding this event please contact the World Affairs Council of Maine at 207-780-4552 or visit the website at www.wacmaine.org.

More about Jeff Thaler:

Jeff Thaler is an attorney in the Portland law offices of Bernstein Shur as well as a senior member of their Energy, Environmental, and Litigation Practice Groups; he has a wide-ranging practice that includes environmental and energy permitting, business, civil rights, and personal injury litigation and .

He recently created and directed a program for Williams College students entitled "Resettling Refugees in Maine". The program brings Williams College students to Maine and introduces them to Maine's new immigrant communities through an experiential three week course which requires that the students have a home stay experience with a refugee or immigrant family. The course first ran in January of 2008 and is scheduled to run again in January 2009. Thaler also helped create and will teach a USM course entitled the "Refugee Experience: From There to Here", co-teaching the course with Professor Lynn Kuzma, chair of USM's Political Science Department, and Reza Jalali, coordinator of Multicultural Student Affairs at USM. He also serves on the Greater Portland Global Community Task Force.

He has been recognized for many years by Best Lawyers in America for his work in environmental and natural resources law, commercial litigation and appellate law, and by Chambers USA for both his environmental and litigation practices. He is a charter member and President-elect of the American College of Environmental Lawyers, and is co-chair of Maine's Environmental and Energy Technology Council. He is also a member of the Council's Board of Directors.