

All of us at the Institute of Politics wish you a wonderful holiday season!

As the year closes and so many of us ready ourselves for another year, we want to express our gratitude for being able to work with so many of you on a range of critical policy topics impacting our region as well as facing our country. To our students, it is always a pleasure working with you, learning from you, and providing you with unique civic engagement opportunities in the Pittsburgh region.

We invite all of you to review this newsletter describing an action-filled fall of 2023.



To stay connected to the IOP, please follow us on: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube

Policy Programming Developments

Criminal Justice Reform: Release of Research Report

On December 12, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and the Institute of Politics released a major new study of racial disparities in Allegheny County's Criminal Justice System, titled **Creating a Path Forward to Reduce Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System in Allegheny County**. The study was commissioned by the Institute of Politics and was conducted by two of the country's most respected research organizations, the RAND Corporation and RTI International. The research report puts forth twenty-nine actionable recommendations to address this critical issue. To learn more about the project and access the research findings, click below.

[Learn More](#)

Regional Progress Forum

Due to extenuating circumstances, the Institute relocated and redesigned this year's 26th Annual Elected Officials Retreat. On November 16, the Institute of Politics hosted the **Regional Progress Forum** at the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh. The forum featured three keynote speakers who each offered unique perspectives on how to build a strong region that provides opportunities for all residents. Distinguished keynote speakers included:

- Maria Flynn, CEO, Jobs for the Future - **"Workforce and the Regional Economy: Providing Opportunities for All"**
- Stephanie Hoopes, National Director, United Way of Northern New Jersey - **"The Face of Poverty in Pennsylvania: the ALICE, United Way"**
- Rick Siger, Secretary, PA Department of Community and Economic Development - **"Plan for Pennsylvania's Future"**

The IOP wishes to thank Stefano Pashman, CEO of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development; Bobb Watt Geer, President and CEO of the United Way of SWPA; and Richard Taylor, CEO of ImbTec, for serving as moderators. We look forward to continuing the conversations generated through this program in early 2024.

Dual Enrollment Promising Practices Pilot Project

In partnership with the University's Learning Research and Development Center (LRDC), select regional schools will participate in a pilot program involving evaluations of programmatic enhancements aimed at increasing access and equity in dual enrollment programming. Selected schools will receive \$40,000 each to implement these administrative and programmatic changes. This pilot project aims to assist policymakers in identifying practices that increase access to and equity in dual enrollment programming within school districts and across Pennsylvania and follows the release of the **IOP Task Force on Equity in Dual Enrollment and Pre-arranged High Programing Report** on recommendations for supporting a more equitable dual enrollment system in Pennsylvania.

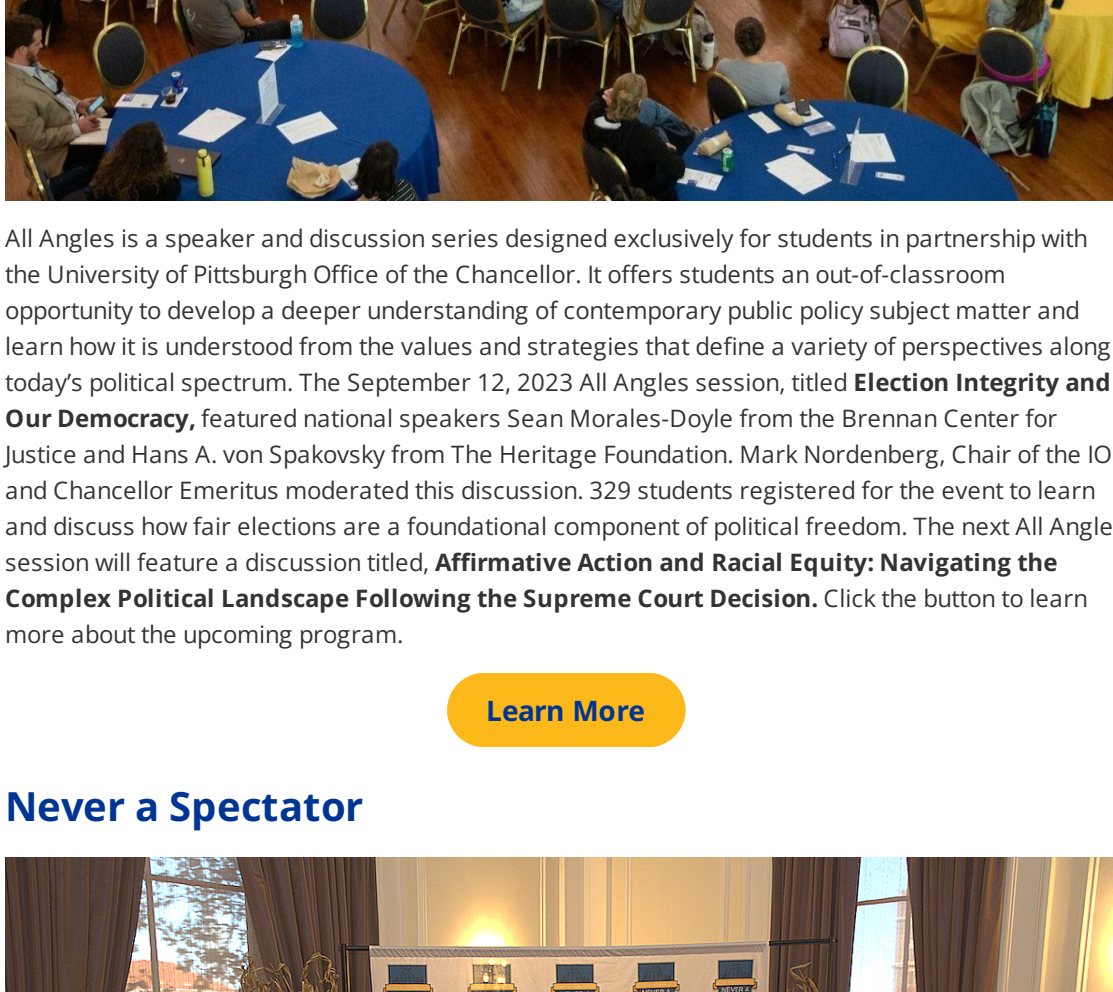
Family Caregiving in Pennsylvania

In August, the Institute's Health and Human Services Policy Committee convened to discuss the issue of family caregiving policy in Pennsylvania. Hosted by committee co-chairs Leslie Osche, Butler County Commissioner, and Dan Frankel, Democratic Chair of the PA House Health Committee, the meeting provided an opportunity for both new and preexisting members to share their personal and professional experiences with family caregiving, as well as to suggest ways to prioritize the numerous issues within this policy space. Meeting attendees included several University of Pittsburgh deans and professors, local health and human services policymakers, disability advocates, and elected officials based in Southwestern Pennsylvania who have demonstrated an interest in family caregiving policy.

Throughout the fall, IOP policy staff met with researchers and policy analysts from the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Caregiving Research, Education and Policy. We look forward to their participation on the Health and Human Services Policy Committee at the University of Pittsburgh who are also working to address aspects of family caregiving policy. The next meeting will take place in early 2024. The results of the research along with a set of state policy recommendations will be released in December 2024.

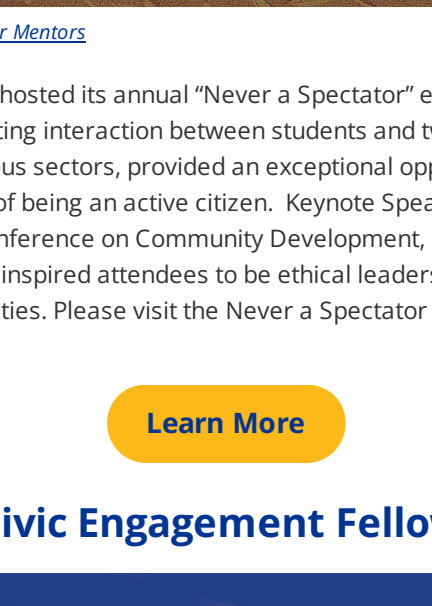
Accolades

2023 Coleman Awardees



Congratulations to 2023 Coleman Award winners **Jim Boddey** and **Dr. Christine McClure!** Check out their tribute videos to learn more about their service to the southwestern PA region.

IOP Staff News



On November 17, IOP Student Program Coordinator Kay Schachner defended their master's thesis "Unmasking Alienation in the Lived Experiences of Songwriters", completing their Master of Music Therapy (Mental Health Counseling concentration) degree from Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. Congratulations, Kay!

Ann M. Dykstra Scholar Internship Award - Fall 2023



The award was established to commemorate the invaluable contributions of Dr. Ann Dykstra, who played a pivotal role as one of the founders of the IOP's Internship and Seminar program and served as a co-ordinator for its initial fifteen years along with serving in government relations for the University of Pittsburgh. Every semester, a single student who best exemplifies the qualities that distinguished Dr. Dykstra as both a scholar and a government affairs professional is selected to receive this honor. This semester's award is bestowed upon Olivia Rosati in recognition of her outstanding qualities in assignments, contributions in class, and mentor evaluation.

Marc Cherna Fellowship



The 2023-24 Inaugural Marc Cherna Fellow is Jessica Neal a second-year Master of Social Work student. She is passionate about improving access to quality mental and behavioral health care for underserved populations, advocating for human rights, and promoting social justice. Jessie's academic and professional interests are shaping policy in a positive direction and addressing present inequalities through human services. Jessie is working with the Department of Human Services in the Office of Behavioral Services. Her research will focus on individuals with hoarding disorders and the importance of mental health services and the comprehensive multi-system policy framework that encompasses individuals with this disorder.

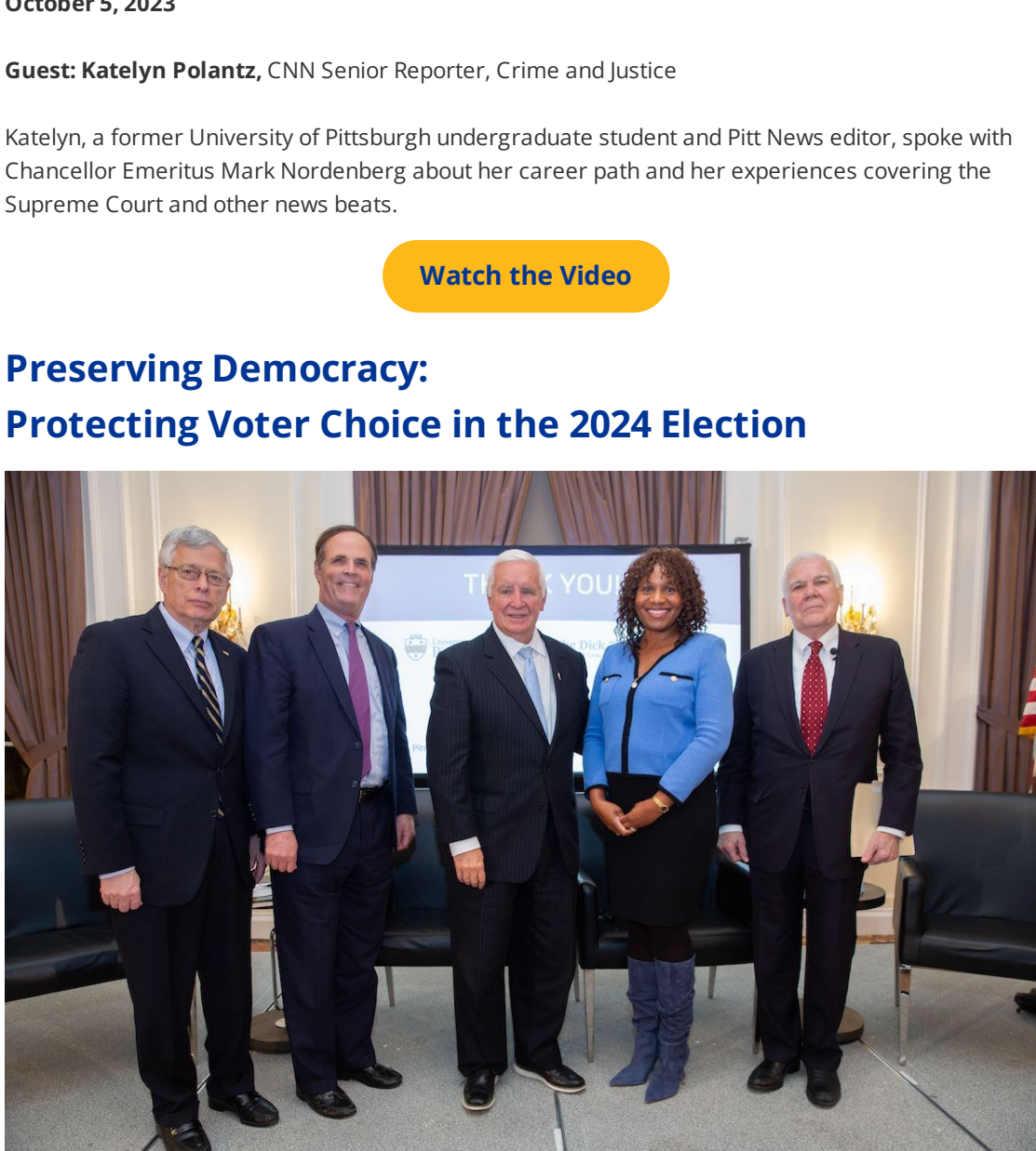
Student Programming: Elsie Hillman Civic Forum



All Angles is a speaker and discussion series designed exclusively for students in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh Office of the Chancellor. It offers students an out-of-classroom opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of contemporary public policy subject matter and learn how it is understood from the values and strategies that define a variety of perspectives along today's political spectrum. The September 12, 2023 All Angles session, titled **Election Integrity and Our Democracy**, featured national speakers Sean Morales-Doyle from the Brennan Center for Justice and Hans A. von Spaikovsky from The Heritage Foundation. Mark Nordenberg, Chair of the IOP and Chancellor Emeritus moderated this discussion. 329 students registered for the event to learn and discuss how fair elections are a foundational component of political freedom. The next All Angles session will feature a discussion titled, **Affirmative Action and Racial Equity: Navigating the Complex Political Landscape Following the Supreme Court Decision**. Click the button to learn more about the upcoming program.

[Learn More](#)

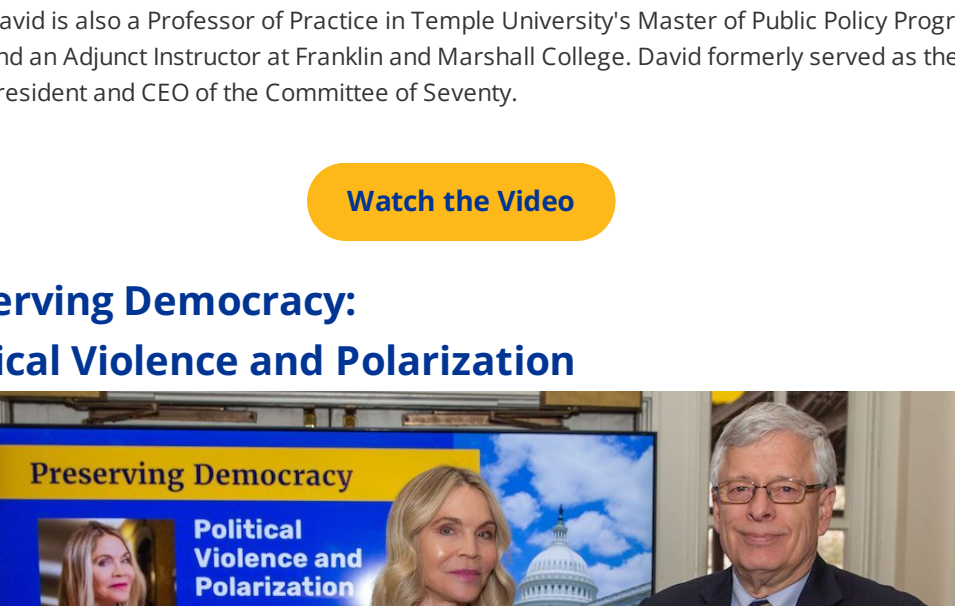
Never a Spectator



The Elsie Hillman Civic Forum hosted its annual "Never a Spectator" event on October 24, 2023. The event's unique format, facilitating interaction between students and twenty-three esteemed community leaders from various sectors, provided an exceptional opportunity for networking, learning, and the importance of being an active citizen. Keynote Speaker Majestic Lane, Chief Equity Officer from the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, presented on **Why Being Mission Driven Matters**, and inspired attendees to be ethical leaders, engaged citizens, and remain open to new opportunities. Please visit the Never a Spectator page for more information about this event.

[Learn More](#)

Ambassador of Civic Engagement Fellowship (ACE)



The 2023-24 Elsie Hillman ACE Fellows are working with PA schools to develop a white paper that will allow policymakers, funders, and parents to understand potential pitfalls for redesigning the school choice patterns and feeder patterns within Allegheny County. Students participating in this fellowship are:

- Noah Manalo, Law/GSPA, expected date of graduation: 2026
- China McEachron, Law, expected date of graduation: 2024

More information is available on the Ambassador of Civic Engagement program site.

[Learn More](#)

Elsie Hillman Honors Scholars

Scholar's Name	Grad Year	Majors	Placements
Olivia Studnicki	2024	Chemistry; Neuroscience	POWER
Isabel Lam	2024	Political Science; Economics	United Way of Southwestern PA
Zhanvi Anupama Dasika	2024	Neuroscience; Philosophy (Pre-Med)	Adagio Health
Kiana Dunbar	2024	Psychology	National Council for Jewish Women
Hudson Kelly	2024	Legal Studies	Children's Institute
James Rakowski	2024	Chemistry (Pre-Med)	Children's Institute
Dominic Todd Victoria	2024	Public & Philosophy; Public and Professional Writing	ACTEDH-Housing
Lily Schneider	2024	Biological Sciences - Research	Women's Center and Shelter
(Isabella) Ruby Scupp	2025	Politics & Philosophy; Psychology	University of Pittsburgh Community Engagement Center
Enola (Emily) Diamond Ayo-Ojo	2025	Natural Sciences; Gender, Sexuality & Social Justice	Healthy Start
Helen Hernandez	2025	Political Science; Philosophy	Ascender
Chloe Edwards	2025	Law, Criminal Justice, & Society	Bidwell Training Center

The Honors Scholars program pairs students with regional community partners to research issues that reflect the social commitment of Elsie Hillman. For the 2023-24 academic year, twelve scholars have been placed with the organizations listed above to work on issues around health literacy, reproductive rights, economic disparities, and other issues that were valued by Elsie. The Scholars also attend a bi-weekly letter graded seminar and receive three credits from the Honors College. For more information about the scholars and their placements, please visit the Elsie Honors Scholars program page.

[Learn More](#)

Internship and Seminar Program

The Elsie Hillman Civic Forum partners with the Political Science Department and the College of General Studies to offer the Internship and Seminar Program, a four-credit, letter-graded course twice per year. For the fall 2023 semester, eighteen students have been placed with the following elected officials in Fall 2023 semester.

- Pennsylvania Senate**
 - Jay Costa
 - Lindsey Williams
- Pennsylvania House of Representatives**
 - Aerion Abney
 - Dan Deasy
 - Dan Frankel
 - Emily Kinkead
 - Dan Miller
 - Nick Pisciotello
 - Albigal Salisbury
 - Arvind Venkat
- Local Government**
 - Allegheny County Controller Corey O'Connor
 - Etna Borough Councilwoman Alice Gabriel
 - Pittsburgh City Councilman Tony Coghill
 - Pittsburgh City Councilperson Deb Gross
 - Pittsburgh City Councilman Bruce Kraus
 - Pittsburgh City Councilman R. Daniel Lavelle
 - Pittsburgh City Councilperson Erika Strassburger

[Learn More](#)

Institute of Politics Interns

The Institute would like to thank its current cohort of interns for their contributions to this year's programs and projects.

Elsie Civic Engagement Intern - Madelynn Lederer (top), Majors: Political Science and Public & Professional Writing; Expected graduation: May 2024

Graduate Policy Intern - Jalebi Kumar (bottom left), Major: Master's in Public and International Affairs; Expected graduation: May 2025

Undergraduate Policy Intern - Sam Coleman (bottom right), Major: Political Science; Expected graduation: May 2025

Dick Thornburgh Forum for Law and Public Policy

The Dick Thornburgh Forum hosted three major events in the fall of 2023.

Preserving Democracy: The Critical Role of the Media

October 5, 2023

Guest: Katelyn Polantz, CNN Senior Reporter, Crime and Justice

Katelyn, a former University of Pittsburgh undergraduate student and Pitt News editor, spoke with Chancellor Emeritus Mark Nordenberg about her career path and her experiences covering the Supreme Court and other news beats.

[Watch the Video](#)

Preserving Democracy: Protecting Voter Choice in the 2024 Election

November 8, 2023

Founded in 2020, Keep our Republic is a non-partisan civic education organization dedicated to protecting a republic of laws and strengthening the checks and balances of our democratic electoral system. Its civic creed is: Let all eligible voters vote. Let the votes be counted. Let the vote count stand. Given the events of January 6, 2021, the organization believes that all citizens, civic groups, media, business leaders and elected officials at every level must join together and be alert to the challenges ahead. Factivity is not an option.

This program featured the following distinguished panelists and moderator who all serve on the Pennsylvania Advisory Council of Keep our Republic:

- Tom Corbett**, former U.S. attorney, chair of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Pennsylvania attorney general, and Governor of Pennsylvania. He currently is the Chair of Keep our Republic and is executive in residence at Duquesne University School of Law and most recently served as an adjunct professor at the law school.
- Robert Cindrich**, former District Judge for the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania, Public Defender and Assistant District Attorney in Allegheny County and US Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania. He retired from the bench to serve as Chief Legal Counsel to University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.
- Amanda Green Hawkins**, voter-protection attorney who recently served on the Lawyers Steering Committee for the PA Democratic Party. She serves on the boards of several non-profit organizations, and has frequently appeared as a guest on television in the Pittsburgh area. Former Councilmember on Allegheny County Council where she led the passage of countywide legislation that prohibits discrimination based on gender identity or expression. In 2019, she was the PA Democratic nominee for Superior Court Judge.

Program Moderator:

- David Thornburgh**, Senior Advisor to the Committee of Seventy and Chair of Ballot, PA. David is also a professor of practice in Temple University's Master of Public Policy Program and an adjunct instructor at Franklin and Marshall College. David formerly served as the President and CEO of the Committee of Seventy.

[Watch the Video](#)

Preserving Democracy: Political Violence and Polarization

November 28, 2023

As this country moves through unsettling times, there is a growing concern that the threat of political violence has become more real and that the legitimacy of the use of force to achieve political goals has come to be accepted by larger numbers of Americans. Political violence often is linked to select groups and is thought to be spurred by political polarization. The reality, however, may be different. There is evidence suggesting that political violence is rising more generally, that it can be attributed to those across the political spectrum, and that polarization may not be its only cause. The topics discussed in this program include the underlying causes for increasing political violence and a consideration of whether our responses to it inadvertently contribute to its continuation.

Guest: Lisa Nelson, Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and Co-Director of the Collaboratory Against Hate

Lisa was joined in conversation by Chancellor Emeritus Mark Nordenberg, who also serves as the IOP Chair and Director of the Dick Thornburgh Forum.

[Watch the Video](#)

To learn more about these events and upcoming opportunities, visit www.thornburghforum.pitt.edu

Looking Ahead to 2024:

We have many exciting things happening in early 2024!

Policy Programming:

- Harnessing Regional Assets to Provide Economic Opportunities for All** - February 29, 2024
 - Family Caregiving in Pennsylvania** - February 2024
- If interested in attending, please reach out to [Halen Saw](mailto:Halen.Saw@iopolitics.org), IOP Policy Analyst.
- Elsie Hillman Civic Forum** (programming for graduate and undergraduate Pitt students only)
- All Angles: A Discussion on Affirmative Action** - Thursday, January 18, 2024.
 - Legislator for a Day** - Tuesday, March 19, 2024

Dick Thornburgh Forum for Law and Public Policy (open to the public)

- The Thornburgh Family Lecture on Disability Law & Policy**
"Race-Disability Intersectionality as a Health Equity Imperative"
January 30, 2024, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
University of Pittsburgh School of Law Courtroom
Featuring Mary Crossley, Interim Dean, Professor of Law, John E. Murray Faculty Scholar and former Dean of Pitt Law
[Register now using this link](#)

To view the IOP's most recent annual report, please click [here](#).

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