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Justice Sotomayor Visiting Houston to Discuss Legal Education

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor is visiting Houston Jan. 26 to answer law students' questions and sit down with a law professor for a talk about the role of legal education.

By **Angela Morris** | January 19, 2018



U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor is visiting Houston on Jan. 26 to answer law students' questions about her life story and sit down with a law professor for a talk about the role of legal education.

Sotomayor's visit to the University of Houston Law Center will put her face to face with law and pre-law students, who submitted advance questions and will listen as law dean Leonard Baynes

moderates a discussion with the Justice about the students' queries. As Sotomayor has done at past events, it's likely she will walk among the students in the law classroom during her talk. Students will enjoy that personal touch, Baynes said.

"It's like meeting the president, because you read all these cases; you debate them and discuss their analysis in class; and then you see them—the real person," Baynes said. "I think from that standpoint, it personalizes the cases you read."

After Sotomayor's question-and-answer session with students, she will sit down in Krost Hall with law professor Michael Olivas. Registrations for the 500 seats in the hall is full, but the school is still taking registrations (<https://uhlc.wufoo.com/forms/z5ghgbr1fdwfcj/>) for an overflow room where Sotomayor's talk will be live-streamed. While the event isn't open to the general public, Olivas said that lawyers and judges are attending in addition to law students.

Olivas, who said he's known Sotomayor personally and professionally for a long time, said that the main topic of discussion will be the role of legal education, but he's planning to ask general questions about the Supreme Court such as whether justices are more impressed by oral arguments or by lawyers' briefs.

"I'm still starstruck, honestly. She has that effect on people—even though, in truth, she is extremely unassuming for someone of her stature. But all of us are starstruck," Olivas said.

Baynes said the student Q&A session will include up to 100 law student leaders from the student bar association, student organizations and law journals, as well as pre-law students. They have submitted questions, mainly focused on Sotomayor's own life story, detailed in the justice's book, "My Beloved World."

“I think a lot of the students see themselves in her and her success and they want to see how she did it and how she copes,” Baynes said. “Here’s this person who’s done all these great things and overcome all these barriers, and if she can do it, then as a student I should be able to do it.”

Former President Barack Obama nominated Sotomayor and in August 2009 she became the first Latina on the Supreme Court. Previously she was a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and a U.S. District Court judge in the Southern District of New York. Earlier in her career she was a commercial litigator and an assistant district attorney in New York. She earned her undergraduate degree in 1976 from Princeton University and her law degree from Yale Law School in 1979.

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