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Susan Erlichman or Harriet Robinson
410.576.9494 or 1.800.492.1340

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Maryland Legal Services Corporation Announces 2011 Legal Services Awards

October 4, 2011 – The Board of Directors of the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) has selected the recipients of its 2011 legal services awards. F. Vernon Boozer, Chairman of the MLSC Board, Maryland Chief Judge Robert M. Bell and members of the MLSC Board will present the awards at the organization's annual awards reception on Monday, December 5, 2011, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Radisson Plaza Lord Baltimore Hotel.

M. Natalie McSherry of Kramon and Graham PA, and **Mitchell Y. Mirviss** of Venable LLP, will both receive the **Arthur W. Machen, Jr. Award**. This award is presented annually to an attorney (usually in private practice) who has rendered extraordinary service by providing civil legal services to the poor or by improving the civil legal services delivery system for such persons. Ms. McSherry, in private practice over 30 years, has been an active volunteer providing pro bono services and serving on the boards of Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service and other legal services programs. Mr. Mirviss has been active as lead counsel in the lengthy class action suit to reform the Baltimore City foster care system for over 20 years and also demonstrates his dedication through his continuous pro bono representation of children with severe disabilities.

Debra L. Gardner, legal director of the Public Justice Center, will be honored as this year's recipient of the MLSC **Benjamin L. Cardin Distinguished Service Award**. This award is presented annually to an outstanding public interest attorney regularly involved in providing, promoting or managing civil legal services to the poor. Ms. Gardner has dedicated over 25 years to legal services and has provided leadership in the Right to Counsel/Civil Gideon efforts locally and nationally.

This year's **William L. Marbury Outstanding Advocate Award**, for a non-attorney who has demonstrated outstanding service representing the rights and legal needs of low-income persons or by expanding access to justice for such persons, will be presented to **Michelle Swift**, pro bono program manager at Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service. For 13 years as a paralegal and manager, Ms. Swift has shown dedication to her clients and the attorney volunteers.

MLSC is presenting the **Herbert S. Garten Public Citizen Award**, which honors an entity or organization not regularly engaged in the delivery of legal services to low-income persons, to **Maryland People's Law Library**, which has been maintained by the Maryland State Law Library since 2007. The People's Law Library is an award-winning website that provides legal and self-help information on Maryland and federal law affecting low- and moderate-income Marylanders and their families.

The MLSC Board is also presenting an **Award of Special Recognition to Janet Stidman Eveleth**, the recently retired director of communications of the Maryland State Bar Association, for her journalistic excellence in her coverage of legal services issues during her 24-year tenure.

MLSC annually solicits nominations for legal services awards from bar associations, legal services programs and other interested persons and organizations. MLSC was established by the Maryland General Assembly in 1982 to receive and distribute funds to nonprofit organizations that provide civil legal assistance to low-income persons. From its inception, MLSC has made grants totaling over \$149 million to help provide services in more than 1.8 million legal matters for Maryland's families in areas of family, housing, consumer, employment, health care and other civil legal matters. ###

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