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Dear Friends of Human Rights and the University of Notre Dame:

I hope you will join me in supporting the Center for Civil and Human Rights of the University of Notre Dame Law School.

I founded the Center in 1973, following my service as chair of the United States Civil Rights Commission. Currently I serve as honorary chair of the Center's Advisory Committee. I am passionately committed to the Center and its work.

The Center brings to bear the Law School's educational and research capabilities in support of civil and human rights. Through teaching, lectures, conferences and scholarly publications, as well as investigations and advocacy by attorneys and students, the Center defends human dignity at home and abroad for all God's children.

The United States has come far since I joined the Civil Rights Commission in 1957. At that time, many of our own citizens were victims of long-standing discrimination in critical fields such as education, employment, housing and voting. Today we have an African-American president. Despite heartening progress, however, much remains to be done to achieve full equality of rights for all of our own citizens and the other citizens of the world.

The Center's vision and reach are global. Its flagship program is the Master of Laws (LL.M.) in International Human Rights. This program provides fifteen full scholarships each year for human rights lawyers from nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, to pursue a year of advanced study in international human rights law at Notre Dame. These students take classes together with law students and lawyers from North America. After they graduate, the program funds their internships in front-line human rights organizations around the globe. The goal is to equip these lawyers – many of whom risk their lives to oppose dictatorship and repression – with world-class legal knowledge and practical skills.

Graduates serve as lawyers in human rights courts and commissions, as ombudspersons and human rights monitors for international organizations, and as human rights defenders in non-governmental organizations. The program's more than 300 graduates from more than eighty countries work in key positions worldwide.

No other University of which I am aware makes this kind of investment in international human rights law on this scale. It is vital that Notre Dame have the resources needed to continue this expression of our mission of service to humanity. I urge you to support the Center for Civil and Human Rights as generously as you can.

Many thanks, and may God bless you.

Ever devotedly in Notre Dame,

(Rev.) Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.

President Emeritus