Announcing a poverty law conference, “Poverty States: Federalism, Rights, and State Anti-Poverty Efforts,” to be hosted by American University Washington College of Law on March 23-24, 2018. This conference will focus on the interplay between federal, state, and local anti-poverty efforts and programs. In 1996, Welfare Reform transformed poverty law field by replacing federal welfare rights with capped block grants to the states. Since then, while welfare rolls went down, welfare failed to provide assistance for many need families, especially in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. Additionally, while the block grants theoretically allowed states greater freedom to experiment with localized programs to help the poor, in practice many states redirected block grant funds to fill holes in their general budget. With Republicans controlling not only Congress and the Presidency but also 34 state governments, there is an increased probability that Speaker of the House Paul Ryan will succeed, at least partially, in his plan to replace nearly all social protections with a single block grant to states. This conference is a gathering for all whose work focuses on poverty and inequality. There are three main lines to the conference:

(1) Federalism (the relationship between the federal and state governments)

(2) State and Local Level Anti-Poverty Efforts (what is working and what is not working, including state constitutional rights, access to justice initiatives, supplemental state programs, etc.)

(3) General Poverty Law Works-in-Progress (subject matter not limited in any way)

Finally, with the right group of contributors, the hope is to put together an edited volume of contributions that fit within the conference theme. Please email eip@wcl.american.edu if you are interested in being part of such an endeavor. The likely outcome is a book similar to The Poverty Law Canon book that Michigan University Press published from the first poverty law conference. Of course, if you would like to present at the conference but publish separately that is welcome as well.

This announcement is largely a hold-the-date, but if you would like to present, please submit a title and abstract by August 1, 2017 to eip@wcl.american.edu. Updates as they are available will be posted to the AUWCL Economic Justice Program’s website: www.economicjusticeprogram.com.