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Presentation of the Law Center

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PRESENTATION OF THE LAW CENTER

*This presentation address was made by
Gov. John C. West at the dedication of the Law Center.*

The history of our nation—and the history of our State—is a chronicle of a people dedicated to the concept of government by law. Throughout the generations, that principle has sustained us through war, through internal division and strife, through economic crises and through the day-to-day challenges which confront a free society. Our experience has taught us, however, that the concept of a nation of laws is no stronger than the men and women who are charged with its protection and perpetuation. Legal education, in that context, becomes the very cornerstone of a system built upon individual liberty and collective freedom as measured, as determined and as guaranteed by the law. Our nation is mature enough to believe that such a concept is the natural right of every person, and it is too young to believe that government based upon that concept cannot work.

Over the years, the State of South Carolina has recognized that no principle is any greater or any more valid than the men and women who carry it out. Those persons trained in the practice of law, from the very earliest days of our settlement, have provided not only the professional guidance and competence so necessary for our survival and growth, they have also been the reservoir from which so much individual leadership and greatness have emerged. A roster of the distinguished leaders of our State reflects the magnificent contribution which the legal profession has made to South Carolina. Not only Governors, Senators, Congressmen, State legislators and judges have emerged from the ranks of lawyers, but also the citizen leaders who have made certain that the voice of the people continues to dominate our society.

Our State—and our nation—will never be any stronger than our ability to defend and protect the rights of the meek and the strong, the poor and the wealthy, the illiterate and the educated. It has fallen to the legal profession to give articulation to these ideals, and to give substance to these aspirations. Ever since its inception, the University of South Carolina has been a special part of that principle in our State. Its School of Law has over the years produced the men and women who have gone forth and who have served in positions of the highest responsibility and distinction in our State. And it has been a continuing resource for the perpetuation of excellence in the legal profession.

Today, as I formally present the new University of South Carolina Law Center to the Board of Trustees, I do so with a feeling of great pride, and great hope in the future of our state. As a graduate of the U.S.C. School of Law, I am proud of the service this institution has rendered to our State. As a Governor who has attempted to steer our State toward a course of greatness in the future, I am especially aware of the continuing and expanding role which this Law Center must play in South Carolina. As I thus make this presentation to Mr. T. Eston Marchant, Chairman of the Board of Trustees on this fourth day of May, 1974, I express my congratulations, and my confidence that future generations of South Carolinians will know even more fully than we the benefits of living in a society in which the rule of law is even more permanent than those who shape, defend, and interpret it.

GOVERNOR JOHN C. WEST