

Accelerating the U.S. Transition to Sustainability

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This presentation is based on Professor Dernbach's new book, *Acting as if Tomorrow Matters: Accelerating the Transition to Sustainability* (Environmental Law Institute Press 2012). Synthesizing answers from 51 sustainability experts in diverse fields, the book provides an empirically based framework to explain the progress made in the United States to date on sustainability, the reasons for this progress, and the most significant obstacles to greater progress. Building on this framework, the book explains in detail how to make a variety of decisions even more attractive to private and government entities, how law can provide a better enabling framework for sustainability, why visionary and pragmatic governance is essential to sustainability, and why a bottom-up movement based on all sectors of society is needed to support the overall effort. The book provides a checklist of ideas and opportunities for moving toward sustainable development in the United States. The book's conclusions may provide insights for the United Kingdom's sustainability effort.

John C. Dernbach is Distinguished Professor of Law at Widener University in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and co-director of Widener's Law Center. His scholarship focuses on environmental law, climate change, sustainable development, and legal writing. Professor Dernbach has written more than 40 articles for law reviews and peer-reviewed journals, and has authored, coauthored, or contributed chapters to 14 books. He leads the only national project that comprehensively assesses U.S. sustainability efforts and makes recommendations for future efforts. As part of that project, he is the principal author of *Acting as if Tomorrow Matters: Accelerating the Transition to Sustainability* (Environmental Law Institute Press 2012) and the editor of *Agenda for a Sustainable America* (ELI Press 2009) and *Stumbling Toward Sustainability* (ELI Press 2002). He is a Visitor to the Faculty of Law for the 2012 Michaelmas Term.

Professor Dernbach coauthored an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of 18 prominent climate scientists in *Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency*. He was a member of the National Research Council Committee that, in *Sustainability and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency* (2011), made recommendations on how to institutionalize sustainability at EPA. Before taking his teaching position at Widener, Professor Dernbach worked in a variety of positions at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and served most recently as that agency's policy director. He is also the coauthor of a widely-used and influential legal writing text, first published in 1981, that is now in a fourth edition and considered a classic in the field. Professor Dernbach graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in 1975, and *cum laude* from the University of Michigan Law School in 1978, where he was a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Law Reform*.