

***RETIRED MEN'S ASSOCIATION OF GREENWICH, Inc. (RMA)
invites you to attend its meeting, on Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2014.
First Presbyterian Church, Lafayette Place, Greenwich, CT.***

PHILIP MCKNIGHT

***UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW. ITS
HISTORIC PAST, ITS UNCERTAIN FUTURE***



In the past twenty years the issues of climate change and sustainable development have become increasingly important to the United States and to the international community. The political, social and economic consequences of addressing these issues are viewed as complex and difficult. The needs and aspirations of the so-called third world, the developing countries, are often seen as at odds with those of the first world, the economically well-developed nations. Both sides have largely been talking at each other instead of with each other at international environmental protection conferences ever since the first one held in Stockholm in 1972.

Clearly, the United States as the world's first economy, although increasingly challenged by China and soon by India for that distinction, must take a primary role in addressing the consequences of climate change and sustainable development. But this country must undertake that task in the context of its historic reluctance to become involved with foreign affairs in the first place, an attitude which can be traced in an all but unbroken line back to George Washington's Farewell Address in 1796 when he warned our new republic that "History and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government," conveniently forgetting that it was the French army and navy which saved him at Yorktown just fifteen years before. Nevertheless, it was not until the end of World War II that the United States fully embraced its international responsibilities, albeit still reluctantly in the area of international environmental protection. Prof. McKnight's lecture will trace briefly this nation's reluctance to become involved in matters of foreign affairs and then will turn to an analysis of the United States' role in the several environmental protection conferences after Stockholm resulting in diverse and sometimes contradictory treaties, conventions and protocols, which have attempted to address the issues of climate change and sustainable development. A less than impressive leadership role, some may complain, but one fully in keeping with our historic past.

Prof. McKnight spent twenty-five years as a trial and appellate attorney, primarily with the firm of Ivey, Barnum & O'Mara here in Greenwich. In 1994 he changed careers and took on the role of alumni and community relations director at his own boarding school, The Hotchkiss School, in Lakeville, CT. Seven years later Phil and his wife Kathy returned to his alma mater, Williams College, in Williamstown, MA, where for the past ten years he has taught a course during the winter term on environmental law and environmental history. He teaches the same course during the fall semester at the near-by Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams, MA. Phil lectured on these subjects at Oxford University in 2007 and 2012 and in India in 2009 at a World Bank-sponsored conference on third-world economic development. Phil also lectures to continuing education organizations in Massachusetts and Connecticut on such subjects as "Shakespeare and the Law" and "The Role of the Law in American Democracy."

Our business meetings begin at 10, and our speakers are scheduled for 10:30. No Charge, and No Reservations are required. For additional information, call Bernard Schneider, 203-698-2558; bgsesq@gmail.com. See our website greenwichrma.org.