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Graham Center brings Civil Rights leader, U.S. Rep. John Lewis to speak at UF

GAINESVILLE, Fla. --- U.S. Rep. and civil rights pioneer John Lewis (D-GA) will deliver a public address at 7 p.m. on Oct. 16 at the University of Florida's University Auditorium. The event is free and open to the public and will be streamed live on the Bob Graham Center website at www.bobgrahamcenter.ufl.edu. The University Auditorium box office will open at 5 p.m. on the day of the event. Tickets will guarantee a seat until 6:45 p.m. at which time seats will be filled on a first come, first served basis.

Lewis, considered the last living legend of the Civil Rights Movement, will speak about the Voting Rights Act - its tumultuous beginning, the events leading to its passage, and its impact over the last 50 years. The Voting Rights Act, signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson in August 1965, aimed to overcome legal barriers that prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote. The act is considered among the most far-reaching pieces of civil rights legislation in U.S. history. Part of the law was overturned by a Supreme Court decision in 2013. Rep. Lewis recently introduced legislation that would update the Voting Rights Act and overcome the decision of the Supreme Court.

Prior to Rep. Lewis' talk, a roundtable discussion will be held, also in the University Auditorium from 4 - 5:30 p.m. titled, "Reflections on the 50th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act." The roundtable will feature UF Political Science Professor Michael McDonald, author Ari Berman, journalist Brentin Mock, and Miami-based attorney Lida Rodriguez-Taseff. The roundtable will be moderated by UF Political Science Professor Dan Smith. Please note that Rep. Lewis will not be present for the roundtable.

The top two floors of the Parking Garage 4 on Museum Rd. and Newell Drive, approximately 300 spots, have been reserved for this event. Parking will open at 4:30 p.m.

The event and round table is sponsored by the Bob Graham Center for Public Service, the Department of Political Science, the Samuel L. Proctor Oral History Program, the African American Studies Program, the College of Journalism and Communications, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, UF Multicultural and Diversity Affairs, Chomp the Vote, Democracy Fund, UFF State & Local Politics Fund.