

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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SCHOLARS DISCUSS THE QUESTION “ARE AMERICAN ELECTIONS TRULY DEMOCRATIC?” AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

Philadelphia, PA (September 3, 2008) - As part of the National Constitution Center's *Election '08: The Power of We* series, the National Constitution Center, in conjunction with the University of Pennsylvania's program on Democracy, Citizenship and Constitutionalism, welcomes Harvard University's **Dennis F. Thompson** and Stanford Law School's **Pamela S. Karlan** to address the timely and provocative question, "Are American Elections Truly Democratic?" Professor Thompson is one of the nation's leading political philosophers who has written extensively on democracy, fairness, and electoral processes. Professor Karlan is one of the nation's foremost experts on electoral laws, and a frequent commentator on legal issues in the national media. This program will take place on Thursday, September 25, 2008, at 6:30 p.m. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 215.409.6700.

Dennis F. Thompson is the founding Director of Harvard's university-wide ethics program, now the Edmond J. Safra Foundation Center for Ethics. His books include *Just Elections: Creating a Fair Electoral Process in the United States*; *Restoring Responsibility: Ethics in Government, Business and Healthcare*; *Political Ethics and Public Office*; and *Ethics in Congress: From Individual to Institutional Corruption*. He is also the joint author with University of Pennsylvania President Amy Gutmann of *Why Deliberative Democracy?* and *Democracy & Disagreement*. Thompson has served as a consultant to the Joint Ethics Committee of the South African Parliament, the American Medical Association, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, and the Department of Health and Human Services. He received his BA in philosophy, summa cum laude, from the College of William and Mary and holds a PhD in political science from Harvard.

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ADD ONE/DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

A scholar and award-winning teacher, Pamela S. Karlan, is also the founding director of the Stanford Law School's Supreme Court Litigation Clinic, where students litigate live cases before the Court. One of the nation's leading experts on voting and the political process, she has served as a commissioner on the California Fair Political Practices Commission and an assistant counsel and cooperating attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. Karlan is the co-author of three leading casebooks on constitutional law and related subjects, as well as more than four dozen scholarly articles. She is a widely recognized commentator on legal issues, and is frequently featured on programs such as the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer. Before joining the Stanford Law School faculty in 1998, she was a professor of law at the University of Virginia School of Law, and served as a law clerk to Justice Harry A. Blackmun of the Supreme Court of the United States and Judge Abraham D. Sofaer of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Jack H. Nagel of the University of Pennsylvania will moderate this program. Nagel serves as Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania and the Steven F. Goldstone Endowed Term Chair. He has served as Associate Dean for Graduate Studies in Penn's School of Arts and Sciences and, prior to that, Chair of Penn's Political Science Department. Nagel's research and teaching center on democratic theory and practice, electoral systems, and political participation. In a 2007 paper published in the *Journal of Politics*, Nagel analyzed the functioning of the Electoral College in the first four U.S. presidential elections, and he is currently at work on assessing the likelihood of disputed elections under the national popular vote as compared with the present Electoral College system.

Election 08: The Power of We is a year-long national initiative created by the Center to promote active, informed citizenship during the 2008 presidential election. This program is part of a series that includes discussions with Elizabeth Edwards and Carly Fiorina about health care and the economy.

The Penn Program on Democracy, Citizenship, and Constitutionalism (the DCC Program) has been established with the aid of a \$2.5 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to the School of Arts and Sciences. Both the University and SAS have designated "democracy

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ADD TWO/DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

and constitutionalism" as a central theme for Penn research and teaching. Because most people experience "constitutionalism and democracy" chiefly through the forms of citizenship that constitutional democracies create, SAS Dean Rebecca Bushnell authorized the DCC Program as a key element in promoting scholarship at all levels on these topics.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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