

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

525 Arch Street | Independence Mall
Philadelphia | PA 19106 | T 215 409 6600 | F 215 409 6650
www.constitutioncenter.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Kathleen Maher
Press and Events Coordinator
215.409.6623
kmaher@constitutioncenter.org

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER CELEBRATES CONSTITUTION DAY – SEPTEMBER 17, 2009

Philadelphia, PA (August 24, 2009) – The signing of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787 by the Founding Fathers is one of the most important and influential events in American history, establishing the many rights and freedoms "We the People" enjoy today. Beginning on Saturday, September 12, and culminating on Constitution Day, September 17, 2009, the National Constitution Center – located only steps away from Independence Hall, where the signing took place – will celebrate the 222nd anniversary of this remarkable day in history with a wide array of inspiring and educational activities. Constitution Day programming is generously supported by the Annenberg Foundation.

The festivities will begin on Saturday, September 12, with family-friendly programming at the Center. During the **Preamble Printing** event, guests can visit the Center's old-fashioned print shop, complete with a replica printing press from the 1700s, to print a copy of the Preamble in the same way Claypool and Dunlap did when they printed the Constitution. Visitors can also join in **Calligraphy Demonstrations**, and learn about the Copperplate printing technique used to sign the Constitution. These activities will be available daily between 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., and are free with museum admission.

Also from September 12 through September 17, between 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., visitors can join in a **Constitution Celebration!** Guests can learn about the three branches of government during the "Balance of Powers Demonstration" and the

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“Separation of Powers Show.” They can also participate in a special “Decoding the Document Workshop” to discover more about the Pennsylvania Packet printing of the Constitution, which is on display in the Center’s main exhibition; and they can compete in a race to reassemble the words of the Preamble during the “Preamble Scramble;” as well as learn about the leadership styles of the Founding Fathers during special tours of *Signers’ Hall* at 10:15 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 1:15 p.m., and 2:15 p.m. These activities are free with museum admission.

The National Constitution Center will kick off the official anniversary of the signing of the Constitution on September 17, with **America Reads the Constitution**, a unique program illustrating the importance of “We the People.” During this powerful event, individuals who serve the nation in a variety of capacities will read the Preamble to the Constitution in succession. Scheduled readers include Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter and his Cabinet members, officials from the National Park Service, and students and teachers from Constitution High School in Philadelphia. Embassy officials in Kabul, Afghanistan have also been invited to participate via Internet 2. This event will take place at 8:30 a.m., and is free to the public. Footage of *America Reads* will be posted on the CBS3 website following the event.

Students who cannot visit the Center on Constitution Day can still participate in the celebration during the **Virtual Field Trip: Signing the Constitution** event at 9:00 a.m. EST. Classrooms around the country can join the Center via live webcast for a special demonstration in *Signers’ Hall* about the signing of the Constitution. Participants will also learn about the Center’s virtual field trip program. Educators can register to join the event at www.constitutioncenter.org/thcp.

Also on Constitution Day, in partnership with Scholastic, Inc., the Center will present **What’s Now, What’s Next**, written by Philadelphia-based theater artist David Bradley. The play, part of a project exploring youth civic engagement, tells the story of three young people: 12-year-old Lisa, an earnest girl getting her first taste of activism; her

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long-time friend Maya, who is busy navigating the complicated social network of adolescence; and Lisa's 18-year-old brother Greg, who is carrying both extra burdens at home since his dad was laid off and a healthy cynicism about civic life. When Lisa's chance to speak at a big school district meeting about environmental issues is threatened by the conflicting demands of family, the three end up on a surprising journey that leads to big discoveries about what it means to take responsibility and stand up for what you believe. Performances will take place at 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m. in the Bank of America Family Theater, and are free with museum admission.

Since no birthday celebration is complete without cake, visitors to the Center can indulge at 12:00 p.m., as the Center commemorates the Constitution's 222nd year. During the **Constitution Birthday Party**, visitors can also decide whether or not to sign a giant copy of the Constitution.

At 1:00 p.m., **Harvey Milk**, best known for his courageous fight for equal treatment for homosexuals as the first openly gay man elected to political office in California, will be inducted into the American National Tree in the Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*. The American National Tree tells the stories of over 100 Americans whose actions have helped write the story of the Constitution. Mark Segal, founder and publisher of the *Philadelphia Gay News*, will give the keynote address. The Center, in partnership with Scholastic Inc. and the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers, selected high school student Sammi Massey, winner of the 2009 M.R. Robinson National Constitution Center American National Tree Award, to author the biography of Milk. This event is free with museum admission.

In addition, a public **Naturalization Ceremony** will take place at 2:00 p.m. in the F.M. Kirby Auditorium, during which immigrants from across the globe will take the Oath of Citizenship to officially become citizens of the United States. Opening remarks will be made by a prominent naturalized citizen, and the Honorable Cynthia M. Rufe, United

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States District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, will preside. This moving ceremony is a meaningful welcome to our newest citizens, providing an opportunity to honor the talents, skills, and cultural heritages they bring to our nation. Participants in the ceremony will receive a printed copy of *The American National Tree: Biographies From an Exhibit at the National Constitution Center*, published through a generous gift from Ed Satell, President of Progressive Business Publications, a National Park Owner's Manual, from the Partnerships Office of the National Park Service, and a copy of "The National Parks: This is America," a new documentary film produced by Ken Burns and Florentine Films, with support from the Evelyn & Walter Hass, Jr. Fund, to commemorate this special day. Admission to this event is free.

The Center's latest iPod audio tour, "**We the People**," will debut on Constitution Day. The tour will guide visitors through the main exhibition, highlighting many of the unique interactives and artifacts on display, including the Founders' Library, the Rule of Law Tower, Sandra Day O'Connor's Supreme Court Robe, and the Center's rare public printing of the Constitution in the Pennsylvania Packet. Narrated by the Center's Vice President of Education and Exhibitions, Dr. Steve Frank, the tour includes excerpts from special guests and scholars who have visited the museum, including Harold Holzer, one of the nation's foremost Lincoln scholars, Anthony Lewis, author of *Gideon's Trumpet*, the classic account of the story of Clarence Gideon, who fought for his 6TH Amendment right to a lawyer, Jon Meacham, best-selling author of *American Lion*, a biography of Andrew Jackson, and Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. The "We the People" iPod audio tour was created in partnership with Drexel University's School of Education. Audio tours cost \$5 per person, and include all iPod tours currently available at the Center.

Also debuting for Constitution Day 2009, the "**To Sign or Not to Sign**" Constitution Day lesson plan teaches students about the revolutionary document that established our nation's government. With activities designed for elementary, middle, and high school students, the lesson invites youngsters to role-play as delegates to the Constitutional

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Convention and analyze arguments for and against ratification. The lesson plan is part of the Center's Constitution Day Kit, which also includes a 31-inch by 55-inch laminated copy of the Constitution's original articles and its 27 Amendments, the "Creating the Constitution" DVD, and a special marker for signing the Constitution. The kit costs \$35 and is available for purchase at <http://members.printable.com/innerworkings/nccenter> or www.constitutioncenter.org.

The Center also continues to serve as the nation's central resource for education on the Constitution, featuring its newly redesigned **Constitution Day website** at www.constitutioncenter.org/constitutionday. This interactive site provides a variety of resources for educators, students, community leaders, and government officials to promote this historic day. The website includes video clips of Constitution Day events at the Center, educational resources and lesson plans, on-line versions of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' naturalization test, and a new quiz, "Which Founder Are You?," allowing users to compare his or her personality traits with the men who wrote the Constitution.

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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