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Contact: David Blanchette
(217) 558-8970

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**Smithsonian exhibit January 16 – March 22 features
items from Illinois' first President during Inauguration
of Illinois' latest President**

*"America's New Birth of Freedom" features prized artifacts from
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, and the exhibit
title mirrors President-Elect Obama's Inauguration theme*

Springfield, IL — "America's New Birth of Freedom" is the theme of President-Elect Barack Obama's Inauguration, and it's also the title of a new Abraham Lincoln exhibit opening January 16, 2009 at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. The exhibit features key documents from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) in Springfield, Illinois, and coincides with the national observance of the Lincoln Bicentennial.

The exhibit of ten key Lincoln documents will run through March 22, 2009 in the National Museum of American History's Albert H. Small Documents Gallery. The Museum is located on the National Mall where the majority of the Inaugural events will take place.

"Lincoln's words have enduring meaning and speak in powerful ways to a global audience," said Brent D. Glass, director of the National Museum. "Displaying some of Lincoln's most memorable words will serve as a fitting tribute to one of America's greatest presidents."

The document exhibit will show Lincoln's understanding and expression of the relationship between emancipation and the aims of the Civil War, and how he wanted the country to emerge from the war. The exhibit coincides with the opening of the Smithsonian's "Abraham Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life," as well as the national celebration of the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth. Featured items include:

- The Emancipation Proclamation. This is a copy of the Proclamation that was among several printed to raise funds for medical supplies for Union soldiers.
- Using black troops in battle. This January 14, 1863 letter from Lincoln to General John Dix concerns the use of 2,000 black troops to garrison a Union fort.
- The logic of Emancipation. Lincoln's August 5, 1863 letter to General Nathaniel Banks argues "As an anti-slavery man I have a motive to desire emancipation, which pro-slavery men do not have; but even

they have strong enough reason to thus place themselves again under the shield of the Union; and to thus perpetually hedge against the recurrence of the scenes through which we are now passing."

- Addressing the critics of Emancipation. An August 26, 1863 letter to James Conkling puts it bluntly: "Why should they [blacks] do any thing for us, if we will do nothing for them?"
- "Read it very slowly." Unable to attend the Grand Union Rally in Springfield, Lincoln sent his August 26 comments to Conkling to be read aloud to those assembled, along with an August 27 note telling Conkling to "Read it very slowly."
- The destruction of the enemy. Lincoln wrote to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton on January 5, 1865, agreeing with General Sherman's strategy to take the war to South Carolina, conducting it with the goal of destroying the enemy.
- Letter to Ulysses S. Grant. Lincoln's April 2, 1865 letter to Ulysses S. Grant accepts the general's invitation to tour the fallen Confederate capital of Richmond.
- "That this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away." Answering a request for a portion of his Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln wrote these immortal words in a March 20, 1865 letter to Amanda Hall.
- Peace talks. Lincoln wrote to influential Republican Francis P. Blair on January 18, 1865 that he held little hope for Blair's notion of peace talks with the Confederacy.
- Surrender of the South. An April 5, 1865 letter to John Campbell about Lincoln's terms for peace became moot four days later when Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House.

"Once Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, he never retreated, and he repeatedly indicated that he wanted specific things to happen on the road to remake the nation in the image of the Declaration of Independence," said Illinois State Historian Thomas Schwartz, who helped organize and curate the Smithsonian exhibit. "The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is delighted to have the opportunity to share some of our most precious documents from Illinois' first President during the Inauguration of Illinois' latest President."

The ALPLM's Mobile Exhibit "Abraham Lincoln: Self-Made in America," a 53-foot, double-expandable tractor-trailer display of highlights from the Springfield museum, will be parked in the vicinity of the National Museum of American History during the first few days of the exhibit. The Mobile Exhibit is the only nationally traveling truck exhibit to highlight the Lincoln Bicentennial and has welcomed more than 100,000 visitors to date. The Mobile Exhibit is sponsored by Caterpillar, the Illinois Soybean Association, Illinois Bureau of Tourism, and Ray McCaskey.

The ALPLM is also co-publishing a book with National Geographic, Abraham Lincoln's Extraordinary Era, that has been released as part of the nation's Lincoln Bicentennial celebration.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (www.presidentlincoln.org) has scheduled many events to commemorate Lincoln's 200th birthday. For a full list of Bicentennial activities in Illinois, visit the Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission website at www.lincoln200.net.

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