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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CELEBRATION OF CONSTITUTION DAY 2005
BEGINS AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER
*Mark Our Founding Document's 218th Birthday***

Philadelphia, PA (August 29, 2005) – Constitution Day is an important celebration for the United States, commemorating the historic signing of the Constitution on September 17, 1787. This year, it is even more important because of new federal legislation requiring schools and federal agencies to conduct programs on the Constitution. At the National Constitution Center, the celebration will last all week long, featuring a variety of programs and events that provide children and adults with a better understanding of the continued significance of the Constitution.

The festivities begin on Friday, September 16, when the public can observe a naturalization ceremony. Then, high school classes and the general public can view a taped video broadcast of Justices O'Connor and Breyer discussing why we have and need a Constitution in *Conversations with Supreme Court Justices* at 12:00 noon and 3:00 p.m. A live broadcast of a special edition of *Justice Talking*, titled *Free Speech in the Digital Age*, will also be shown at 1:30 p.m. via satellite from the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

The centerpiece of the celebration – *America Reads the Constitution*, an annual, national ritual at the Center – will take place on Saturday, September 17 at 10:00 a.m. A live reading of the Constitution from “We the People” to the final words of the 27th Amendment will be read aloud by a diverse group of Americans, including children, public officials, sports mascots, and more! To reserve a space in the reading, contact nationalprograms@constitutioncenter.org.

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ADD ONE/CONSTITUTION DAY 2005

Other exciting events on September 17 include the Center's monthly *Celebrate Your State* event from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., honoring the birthday of California; *Two of a Kind: Patriotic Music* at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.; and *Lincoln Family Fun Day: Lookin' For Lincoln* from 11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., during which families can explore the National Constitution Center's exhibits, including *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War*, using maps and questions. A raffle for participants who correctly complete the exploration will conclude the event, and the winning family will receive a free family membership. All participating children will receive a complimentary Lincoln growth chart. Kids can also enjoy making their own Lincoln masks!

The National Constitution Center is also proud to host the Liberty Medal Ceremony on September 17. Viktor Yushchenko, President of Ukraine, is the recipient of this year's Philadelphia Liberty Medal. The ceremony will take place at 2:00 p.m. on the front lawn of the Center. Standing tickets are available, weather permitting, for this outdoor ceremony with advance reservations. Call 215-409-6600 for more information.

The festivities continue on Sunday, September 18 with the *Supreme Court Preview* at the New York City 92nd Street Y. Guests can join a group of experts in discussing the cases that the Supreme Court will hear, and how at least one new Supreme Court Justice may change the nature of what is the most mysterious branch of government. Participants include Yale law professor and author Akhil Reed Amar and Rick Pildes, professor at the New York University School of Law. To attend the event, contact nationalprograms@constitutioncenter.org.

Visitors to the National Constitution Center can enjoy special screenings of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, producer/director Frank Capra's classic comedy-drama on September 18 at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. James Stewart's character represents the powerful forces of American freedom, democracy and morality over corruption and evil in his emotional portrait of a naïve, idealist, patriotic young man. After being sent to Washington as a junior senator from an un-named state, Jefferson Smith grows in wisdom and fights political corruption within his state's political machine. Admission to the film is free.

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ADD TWO/CONSTITUTION DAY 2005

On Monday, September 19, guests can join Akhil Reed Amar – professor of Constitutional law at Yale Law School and Yale College and a member of the National Constitution Center’s Distinguished Scholars Advisory Panel – for *National Debut! The Constitution: A Biography*. Amar will launch his new book, *AMERICA’S CONSTITUTION: A Biography*, which is full of information that either contradicts what is taught in school or raises issues that many might never have considered. Program admission is \$9 for members, \$12 for non-members, and \$6 students. Reservations are required and can be made at 215-409-6700.

On the national level, the National Constitution Center is America’s resource for constitutional education. In 2004, Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia passed legislation requiring that all schools and colleges receiving federal funds offer education programming involving the Constitution. The Center, in partnership with the Bill of Rights Institute, the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and others, is offering educational and programming materials to schools, federal agencies and other institutions nationwide to help them organize events to commemorate Constitution Day, September 17. These materials will be available at little or no cost on a new website, www.constitutionday.us.

Located at 525 Arch Street on Philadelphia’s historic Independence Mall, the National Constitution Center is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and its relevance to Americans’ daily lives. Opened on July 4, 2003, 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”. From June 10 through November 4, the museum is also featuring its first new traveling exhibition, *Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War*. The Center is open seven days a week, and admission is \$9 for adults and \$7 for seniors ages 62 and up, children ages 4-12, and active military personnel. Children ages 3 and under are free. Group rates are also available.

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ADD THREE/CONSTITUTION DAY 2005

The National Constitution Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education and debates, and as a home for visiting scholars. Also, serving as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional debate, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6600 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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