

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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HISTORIANS DISCUSS THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY IN CELEBRATION OF PRESIDENTS' DAY AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

Philadelphia, PA (January 26, 2009) – In honor of Presidents' Day, historians **William Leuchtenburg**, **Gary May**, and **Timothy Naftali** will join the National Constitution Center on Monday, February 16, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss the American presidency, each focusing on the administration they wrote about for The American Presidents book series: the unexpected presidency of John Tyler, the challenges Herbert Hoover confronted during the Great Depression, and the administration of George H.W. Bush during the end of the Cold War. The panelists will shed fascinating new light on presidential leadership as they discuss the achievements and challenges of each president's term, from foreign conflicts to domestic crises. Admission costs \$9 for members, \$15 for non-members, and \$7 for students and teachers. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 215.409.6700.

Virginian John Tyler was the first Vice President to be elevated to the office of president by the death of his predecessor, William Henry Harrison. His term was marked by party strife as the Whigs expelled the president from their party and all his cabinet members resigned, except for the Secretary of State. Long after Tyler left the White House, when the first southern states seceded in 1861, he led a compromise movement; failing, he worked to create the Southern Confederacy. He died in 1862, a member of the Confederate House of Representatives.

Catapulted into national politics by his heroic campaigns to feed Europe during and after World War I, Herbert Hoover – an engineer by training – exemplified the economic

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optimism of the 1920s. As president, however, Hoover was sorely tested by America's first domestic crisis of the twentieth century: the Great Depression. Ultimately Hoover's hands-off attempt to enlist the aid of private-sector leaders did little to mitigate the spiral, and he was routed from office by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932.

The policies and themes of George Herbert Walker Bush's presidency resembled those of his Republican predecessor, Ronald Reagan. Prepared by durable national service, Bush came to office equipped to meet the challenges facing the United States as the Cold War ended. He shepherded Russian reformers through the liberalization of their socialist system and skillfully orchestrated the reunification of Germany. And following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, he united the global community to defeat and punish Saddam Hussein. Domestically, Bush reasserted principles of fiscal discipline and political accountability.

William E. Leuchtenburg, a professor emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is a noted authority on twentieth-century American history. A winner of both the Bancroft and Parkman prizes, he is the author of numerous books on the New Deal, including *The FDR Years: On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. In 2008, he was chosen as the first recipient of the Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. Award for Distinguished Writing in American History of Enduring Public Significance. His most recent book is a biography of our 31st president, *Herbert Hoover*.

Gary May is a professor of history at the University of Delaware. He is the author of four books, including the critically acclaimed *The Informant: The FBI, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Murder of Viola Liuzzo*. His newest book is a biography of our 10th president, *John Tyler*.

Timothy Naftali, author of *George H.W. Bush*, is the director of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, having previously served as director of the Presidential Recordings Program at the University of Virginia. A frequent contributor to

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Slate and NPR, he is the co-author of the award-winning *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* and *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964*. He is also the author of *Blind Spot: The Secret History of American Counterterrorism*.

John Tyler, Herbert Hoover, and George H.W. Bush are all part of The American Presidents series from Times Books, an imprint of Henry Holt and Company. Times Books engaged a wide variety of distinguished contributors to present the panorama of our chief executives in biographical essays that focus on the subject's presidency, as well as his life, character, and career.

Princeton University historian **Sean Wilentz** will moderate this program. Wilentz is the series editor of The American Presidents series. In addition to his contribution for the series, *Andrew Jackson*, he is the author or editor of eight previous books, including *Chants Democratic* and *The Rise of American Democracy*. He has also written on contemporary politics and history for the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New Republic*, and other publications.

A book sale and signing will follow the program, courtesy of Joseph Fox Bookshop.

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

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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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