

Press Release

Philadelphia Hosts The 715-Year Old Founding Charter Of Switzerland

Philadelphia, PA – June 10, 2006 – Former Swiss President Arnold Koller and newly appointed President and CEO of the National Constitution Center Joseph M. Torsella will cut the ribbon to unveil the 715-year old Swiss Federal Charter, the founding document of the Swiss Confederation. Known as the “Schweizer Bundesbrief” the document is of comparable importance as the American Declaration of Independence and will be on display at the National Constitution Center for three weeks. It is embedded in the Sister Republics exhibit, which highlights the close constitutional ties between the United States and Switzerland, and is part of the ongoing “Swiss Roots” campaign that encourages Americans of Swiss origin to discover the homeland of their forefathers.

“We are very proud to have been selected for the honor of hosting the maiden voyage of the Swiss Bundesbrief and we extend our sincere thanks to the Swiss people for loaning us their most treasured founding constitutional contract,” said Joseph M. Torsella, President of the National Constitution Center. “It will be displayed in our main exhibition *The Story of We the People*, adjacent to the Preamble of the US Constitution so that viewers can appreciate the strong republican and democratic ties between our two nations.”

The presentation of the Swiss Bundesbrief in Philadelphia is part of the nationwide “Swiss Roots” campaign that Switzerland is currently running in the U.S. “The vision of ‘Swiss Roots’ is to motivate all Americans who feel an affinity for Switzerland to connect with our country and to network with the Swiss people,” says Ambassador Raymond Loretan, Co-Chairman of “Swiss Roots” and Consul General of Switzerland in New York. “There is no more important single document that we could send to America than the Bundesbrief.” To supplement this outreach program the “Swiss Roots” website, www.swissroots.org, offers Swiss descendents the opportunity to explore their Swiss ancestry with just a few mouse clicks.

The June 10th unveiling of the “Bundesbrief” at the National Constitution Center will be followed by a panel discussion featuring former Swiss President Arnold Koller, former US Ambassador to Switzerland Faith Ryan Whittlesey, and the personage of Thomas Jefferson who will offer historical contextual commentary.

Also present at the event will be the Washington DC-based “Swiss Rifles” corps, the First City Troop and the Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the Revolution Color Guard, and the Swiss American Philatelic Society. These groups will be accompanied by Swiss chocolatiers, alphorn players, yodelers, St. Bernards and Bernese Mountain Dogs. The day will be capped by a dinner at Delegates’ Restaurant in the National Constitution Center including Swiss foods and Swiss music performed live by musicians flown in from Switzerland.

Visitors to the National Constitution Center can view the Swiss Bundesbrief as part of their regular museum admission of \$9 for adults, and \$7 for seniors, college students, active military personnel and children ages 4-12. Children ages three and under are free.

About “Swiss Roots”

“Swiss Roots” brings the United States and Switzerland closer together through activities that foster dialogue and understanding, through online exchanges and live events. The program’s centerpiece, www.swissroots.org, is a state-of-the-art website that serves as a tool for more than one million Americans of Swiss descent to discover their ancestral roots and as a gateway for

those curious about Switzerland to discover and communicate with the Swiss people. The “Swiss Roots” website was launched officially on March 29 at the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, D.C., and will be active well into the future.

Featuring various events throughout the United States, “Swiss Roots” will showcase the best in Swiss innovation, culture, history, education, and business. The project is organized by the Consulate General of Switzerland in New York and official Swiss representations in the U.S., in cooperation with numerous local Swiss associations. “Swiss Roots” is supported by Swiss promotional agencies such as Presence Switzerland, Switzerland Tourism and Pro Helvetia. Swiss Roots is also supported by private sector companies such as Swiss Helvetia Fund, Swiss International Air Lines and Swiss Post.

About the National Constitution Center

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 the daily lives of Americans. 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”. For more information, call (215) 409-6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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