

For Immediate Release:

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RELIGIOUS LIBERTY EXHIBIT AT NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH PHILADELPHIA VISITS OF POPE FRANCIS AND THE DALAI LAMA

***Religious Liberty and the Founding of America* Explores the Role of Religion in Early America**

Philadelphia (July 29, 2015) – Timed to coincide with the World Meeting of Families and the historic visits of Pope Francis and His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Philadelphia this fall, the National Constitution Center is presenting a new exhibit titled *Religious Liberty and the Founding of America*. Opening August 21, 2015 and continuing through January 3, 2016, the exhibit features 20 key documents from early American history that illuminate the role religion played in public life in the Founding era and shows how freedom of religion became a right guaranteed by the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

“Religious Liberty and the Founding of America explores the role of religion during the time of America’s founding as well as the debate surrounding religious liberty today,” said National Constitution Center president and CEO Jeffrey Rosen. “The exhibit will inspire and educate visitors participating in the World Meeting of Families Congress and Papal Visit in September, those who will be here to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama receive the Liberty Medal at the National Constitution Center in October, and any visitor interested in a deeper understanding of how the Constitution protects our unalienable rights of religious liberty.”

In conjunction with the World Meeting of Families Congress and Papal Visit, the National Constitution Center is offering discounted admission. From September 22-27, 2015, adults pay \$9 and children \$7.50. The *Religious Liberty* exhibit is free with museum admission.

The exhibit’s several display cases cover the following topics: “Religious Liberty in Colonial America,” “Religious Liberty in the Constitution,” and “The Legacy of Religious Liberty.”

In **“The Legacy of Religious Liberty,”** visitors can view a copy of George Washington’s First Thanksgiving Proclamation (1789) where he states “it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God.” Also included in this section are printings of Washington’s Letter to the Roman Catholics in America and a letter from Thomas Jefferson to Baptists in Connecticut (1802), where he states that the First Amendment builds “a wall of separation between church and state.”

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Among the artifacts to be displayed in the “**Religious Liberty in Colonial America**” section is a printing by Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania’s Charter of Privileges from 1741. Written by William Penn, who founded the Pennsylvania colony based on Quaker ideals, in 1701, it emphasized religious tolerance. Also displayed is A Collection of Public Acts and Ordinances from Virginia (1785). This collection of Virginia laws includes the state’s revolutionary Declaration of Rights. Drafted by George Mason in 1776, it was the first such declaration in the colonies and influenced Thomas Jefferson’s writing of the Declaration of Independence and James Madison’s draft of the Bill of Rights. In addition, this section of the exhibit includes Virginia’s Act for Establishing Religious Freedom (1786). Drafted by Thomas Jefferson, this act was the most expansive of its time and provided that “all men shall be free to profess...their opinions in matters of religion.”

The “**Religious Liberty in the Constitution**” section displays newspaper reports, including James Madison’s speech to the House of Representatives proposing 19 amendments to the Constitution. Visitors discover how the Establishment and Free Exercises Clauses in the First Amendment developed into their final versions.

The National Constitution Center is located at 525 Arch Street on Philadelphia’s Independence Mall. The Center is open 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, until 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and from noon to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. General admission is \$14.50 for adults, \$13 for seniors, students with ID, and youth (ages 13-18), \$8 for children (ages 4-12), and is free for active military. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit constitutioncenter.org.

About the National Constitution Center

The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia inspires active citizenship as the only place where people across America and around the world can come together to learn about, debate, and celebrate the greatest vision of human freedom in history, the U.S. Constitution. A private, nonprofit organization, the Center serves as America’s leading platform for constitutional education and debate, fulfilling its Congressional charter “to disseminate information about the U.S. Constitution on a non-partisan basis.” As the **Museum of We the People**, the Center brings the Constitution to life for visitors of all ages through interactive programs and exhibits. As **America’s Town Hall**, the Center brings the leading conservative and liberal thought leaders together to debate the Constitution on all media platforms. As a center for **Civic Education**, the Center delivers the best educational programs and online resources that inspire, excite, and engage citizens about the U.S. Constitution. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit constitutioncenter.org.

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