

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER TO HOST DISCUSSION ON EMINENT DOMAIN FOUR YEARS AFTER *KELO V. CITY OF NEW LONDON* SUPREME COURT DECISION

Philadelphia, PA (May 20, 2009) – Investigative journalist **Jeff Benedict** and attorneys **Brian Blaesser** and **Scott Bullock** will join the National Constitution Center to discuss the impact of the *Kelo v. City of New London* U.S. Supreme Court case, four years after the highly controversial decision. In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in favor of the government's right to seize private property from one citizen and give it to another capable of generating higher tax revenues. On Wednesday, June 10 at 6:30 p.m., Benedict and Bullock will discuss the concepts of neighborhood, humanity, property, and the freedom encompassed by eminent domain. Admission is free, but reservations are required and can be made by calling 215.409.6700.

The 5-4 opinion, delivered by Justice John Paul Stevens, held the city's taking of private property to sell for private development qualified as a "public use." The city was not taking the land simply to benefit a certain group of private individuals, but was following an economic development plan. Such justifications for land takings, the majority argued, should be given deference. The takings here qualified as "public use," even though the land was not going to be used by the public. The Fifth Amendment did not require "literal" public use, the majority ruled, but the "broader and more natural interpretation of public use as 'public purpose.'"

Investigative journalist Jeff Benedict is the author of *Little Pink House: A True Story of Defiance and Courage*, which tells the story of Susette Kelo's fight to save her New London home. His articles have been published in *Sports Illustrated*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*, and he frequently appears as an expert on network news and cable television programs. Benedict also teaches writing at Southern Virginia University.

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ADD ONE/KELO PROGRAM

Brian Blaesser is a partner at the law firm of Robinson & Cole LLP in Boston, where he heads the firm's Land Use & Real Estate Development practice. Blaesser formerly served as Special Assistant Attorney General for eminent domain actions brought by the Illinois Departments of Transportation and Conservation. In his current practice, he handles condemnation matters for landowners and developers. Blaesser is the principal author of *Condemnation of Property: Practice and Strategies for Winning Just Compensation*, and is the co-author and co-editor of the new American Bar Association book, *Redevelopment: Planning, Law and Project Implementation*, which includes a chapter on the "Use of Eminent Domain in Redevelopment."

Scott Bullock served as co-counsel for the landmark case, *Kelo v. City of New London*. He joined the Institute for Justice at its founding in 1991 and currently serves as a senior attorney, primarily focusing on property rights and free speech cases in federal and state courts. His articles and views on constitutional issues have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, 60 Minutes, ABC Nightly News, and National Public Radio, among others.

A book 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 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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