



CONTACTS:

Denise Venuti Free, National Constitution Center, (215) 409-6636,  
[dvfree@constitutioncenter.org](mailto:dvfree@constitutioncenter.org)

Staci Maiers, National Education Association, (202) 270-5333, [smaiers@nea.org](mailto:smaiers@nea.org)

Brian C. Malina, Verizon Media Relations, (908) 698-3930, [brian.c.malina@verizon.com](mailto:brian.c.malina@verizon.com)

## JAMES EARL JONES UNVEILS MAGNA CARTA AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

*NEA Presents Historic Exhibit as Thinkfinity.org Adds Plethora of  
Free Online Educational Resources on Magna Carta for Parents,  
Educators and History Buffs*

PHILADELPHIA –Legendary actor James Earl Jones and executives from the National Constitution Center, the National Education Association and Verizon, unveiled the new ***Magna Carta: Foundation of Freedom*** exhibit during a special sneak peek Tuesday morning.

Featuring one of only four existing copies of the original Magna Carta, one of the world's greatest charters of freedom, the exhibit, presented by the National Education Association and sponsored by Verizon Communications, will be on display at the National Constitution Center from July 4 through Wednesday, July 25.

This copy of Magna Carta is on loan from the Lincoln Cathedral of the United Kingdom. The exhibit's opening corresponds with the NEA's Annual Meeting and Representative Assembly in Philadelphia. The 3.2 million-member NEA is celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Also, to coincide with this historic exhibit, the Verizon Foundation announced that numerous free, educational resources on the Magna Carta and other historical documents have been added to a special section on the [Thinkfinity.org](http://Thinkfinity.org) home page.

[Thinkfinity.org](http://Thinkfinity.org) is the Verizon Foundation's signature educational and literacy program. It also is an online portal to more than 55,000 educational resources, including standards-based, grade-specific, K-12 lesson plans and other materials that can be used in the classroom, in literacy programs, after-school programs or at home. Content for [Thinkfinity.org](http://Thinkfinity.org) is provided in partnership with 11 of the nation's leading educational organizations.

Written in 1215, Magna Carta, Latin for "Great Charter," is on display as part of the National Constitution Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*. It also coincides with the Center's summer display of the signed Emancipation Proclamation and the printing of the U.S. Constitution from the *Pennsylvania Packet*.

"At the National Education Association, we believe that a quality public education is a basic right of every child—a right as fundamental as those that were spelled out in Magna Carta," said NEA President Reg Weaver. "We believe that our work to close academic achievement gaps and reduce the dropout rate is a natural outgrowth of the great principles that were set forth in these remarkable documents. And we're proud to play a part in bringing these historical treasures together to help America's students understand our nation's values and deepen their love of history."

Magna Carta, "The Great Charter of Liberty," ignited the first embers of democracy in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Magna Carta is universally accepted as a basis of modern constitutional law, having established the foundation of both British and American principles of freedom and due process of law.

"We are honored to display this extremely rare copy of Magna Carta this summer," said National Constitution Center President and CEO Joseph M. Torsella. "It is fitting that treasures from the Center's collection, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Constitution, will also be on display during this time. These three documents represent touchstones of freedom that have had a significant impact on contemporary visions of liberty."

During the special unveiling ceremony Tuesday morning, children from the National Constitution Center's American Adventure Camp performed a play about the history of Magna Carta and, in the spirit of Independence Day, James Earl Jones recited the Declaration of Independence.

In addition to sponsoring the Magna Carta exhibit, the Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Verizon, is offering free lesson plans and educational resources on Magna Carta and other historical documents at [Thinkfinity.org](http://Thinkfinity.org).

The materials for the special section were created and provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities' Web site, EDSITEment, and the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

"These educational resources show how the power of technology can bring life to the important stories of history to capture the imagination of our youth and spread the valuable ideals espoused in documents such as Magna Carta and our own Declaration of Independence," said Verizon Foundation President Patrick Gaston. "At Verizon, we're proud that our Thinkfinity.org partnership can play a role in introducing these documents to the next generation."

Among the resources available to teachers, tutors and history buffs at the Thinkfinity.org Magna Carta section are:

- **In Defense of Liberty: Magna Carta in the American Revolution**  
(Designed for students in grades 9-12) -- In this lesson, students examine an image of a 1775 Massachusetts thirty-shilling note from the collection of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. They discover why Paul Revere featured Magna Carta on the currency he designed, including the thirty-shilling note, and the symbolic importance the document had for American colonists fighting for their "just rights and liberties." <http://americanhistory.si.edu/thinkfinity/magnacarta/>
- **Magna Carta: Cornerstone of the U.S. Constitution** (Designed for students in grades 9-12) -- In this lesson created by the National Endowment for the Humanities' EDSITEment students will learn the role of Magna Carta in shaping the thinking of American colonists and

understand how this document was used to justify independence from Great Britain. [http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=737](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=737)

The exhibit also received support from Bank of America and The Prudential Insurance Company of America.

*Magna Carta: Foundation of Freedom* is free with regular museum admission of \$12 for adults, \$11 for seniors ages 65 and over, and \$8 for children ages 4-12. Active military personnel and children ages 3 and under are free. Group rates are also available. For ticket information, call 215.409.6700 or visit [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org).

The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers.

Verizon Communications Inc. (NYSE:VZ), headquartered in New York, is a leader in delivering broadband and other wireline and wireless communication innovations to mass market, business, government and wholesale customers. Verizon Wireless operates America's most reliable wireless network, serving 60.7 million customers nationwide. Verizon's Wireline operations include Verizon Business, which delivers innovative and seamless business solutions to customers around the world, and Verizon Telecom, which brings customers the benefits of converged communications, information and entertainment services over the nation's most advanced fiber-optic network. A Dow 30 company, Verizon has a diverse workforce of more than 238,000 and last year generated consolidated operating revenues of more than \$88 billion. For more information, visit [www.verizon.com](http://www.verizon.com).

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. Opened on July 4, 2003, the Constitution Center is 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.

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