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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**McCORMICK FOUNDATION'S FREEDOM MUSEUM HOLDS CONFERENCE TO PROMOTE CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

Educators and policy-makers construct Civic Education Blueprint for Illinois schools to prepare, and inspire young people to be responsible, informed, and engaged citizens throughout their lifetime

CHICAGO, Feb. 6— As Illinois prepares to celebrate the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln, a president who gave his life for the furtherance of democracy in the United States, the McCormick Foundation's Freedom Museum, in partnership with the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, hosts a conference to return civics to a central place in schools statewide. Coupled with President Obama's historic inauguration and the unprecedented involvement of young people in the recent election, we believe this is the perfect time to capitalize on this excitement and channel this interest into a lifelong commitment to civic engagement.

"The McCormick Foundation's mission is to ignite the spirit of service and prepare, enable and inspire individuals and organizations to become more actively engaged in their communities," said Dave Anderson, executive director, Freedom Museum. "Reincorporating civics into the curricula of our elementary and secondary schools is vital to advancing our mission and sustaining democracy in Illinois and beyond."

Public schools were created in America with the primary purpose of preparing children to participate constructively as adult citizens in our democracy. Recent school reform efforts have focused primarily on improving student achievement in reading, math and science. The result of this emphasis is that the historical function of the American public school—to educate students for democratic participation and citizenship—has been pushed aside. Like millions of their peers across the country, most Illinois high school students lack sufficient formal instruction and opportunities for the development of civic literacy that enables democratic engagement.

This conference, held February 8-10 at Cantigny Park in Wheaton, Illinois, is bringing together the public and private sectors--Illinois policymakers, state legislators, civic education leaders, researchers, teachers and students to create a civic blueprint for Illinois high schools so that no child is left behind in civic education. Confirmed attendees include Dr. Diana Hess, professor of education, University of Wisconsin; Dr.

Joseph Kahne, professor of education, Mills College; Ted McConnell, executive director, National Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools; Jesse Ruiz, chairman, Illinois State Board of Education; and Judge Diane Wood, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

“Illinois has some outstanding examples of high schools committed to the civic mission of schools. Five high schools have already been recognized as Democracy Schools by the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition, said Carolyn Pereira, chair, Illinois Civic Mission Coalition and executive director, Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago. “These schools are determined to expand and improve their civic learning opportunities to all of their students. Our goal, along with the Freedom Museum, is to increase the number of Democracy Schools in Illinois, by working with the stakeholders to create policies so that all Illinois high schools will be ‘Democracy Schools,’” Pereira said.

For additional information on this initiative please visit, www.crfc.org/programs/civicmission.php.

If you are interested in attending the conference or receiving a report generated following the conference, please contact Abby Taylor at 312 222 3188 or ATaylor@McCormickFoundation.org.

About the McCormick Foundation

The McCormick Foundation is a nonprofit organization committed to strengthening our free, democratic society by investing in children, communities and country. Through its five grantmaking programs, Cantigny Park and Golf, and three world-class museums, the Foundation helps build a more active and engaged citizenry. The Foundation was established as a charitable trust in 1955, upon the death of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the Chicago Tribune. The Foundation is one of the nation’s largest charities, with \$1.2 billion in assets.

About the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition is a broad, non-partisan consortium including educators, administrators, students, universities, funders, elected officials, policymakers, and representatives from the private and non-profit sectors. Formed in 2004, its purpose is to create consensus among civic education advocates across Illinois relative to achievable goals, the means of attaining them, and the underlying rationale for the restoration of the civic mission of high schools statewide.

For more information about this conference, log onto www.FreedomMuseum.US or the McCormick Foundation at www.McCormickFoundation.org.

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