

For Immediate Release

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## **AMERICA'S FIRST MUSEUM DEDICATED TO FREEDOM AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO OPEN IN CHICAGO**

*McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum Creates Robust Learning Experiences*

**CHICAGO, March 17, 2006** - Does freedom mean you can burn the American flag? Does freedom mean you can really say anything you want? The McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum explores such questions when it opens its doors on April 11, 2006, on Chicago's famed Michigan Avenue.

The McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum is the nation's first museum dedicated to helping people - especially teenagers - understand freedoms, with a focus on those guaranteed by the First Amendment.

"We've found that more than half of Americans can name at least two characters from the 'Simpsons' cartoon family while only about 28 percent can recall two or more First Amendment freedoms," said Dave Anderson, executive director, McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum. "Our museum's mission is to help people better understand and value their freedoms, so that they may protect and defend them. As citizens of a democratic society, we cannot take our freedoms for granted."

The museum houses highly interactive exhibits that not only display images, but also engage visitors to make choices, express their opinions, explore their own limits and compare views in a compelling and fun way. While the museum's story is grounded in history, its overall thrust is on contemporary issues - creating a unique experience. Whether listening to banned music, viewing T-shirts used by kids to protest at school or reading about freedom in other countries, visitors are encouraged to explore freedom in a relevant and unbiased context that allows them to reach their own conclusions.

"Ultimately, our goal is for children and adults to understand that all of us have something meaningful to contribute to American democracy," said Anderson. "We've built the Freedom Museum to play a role in the lives of our children and inspire a life-long commitment to civic engagement."

### **Exhibits Exposed**

The Freedom Museum covers two floors and 10,000 square feet of exhibit space. Each exhibit provides an opportunity to stimulate senses through stunning visuals, enlightening audio, exploratory flip books and thought-provoking movies and presentations. The museum also showcases special features that bring to life freedom concepts.

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### **Museum Main Exhibits:**

- **Roots of Freedom:** Explore ideas, examine documents and learn about people that had a major influence on American freedoms. Visitors can listen to Ben Franklin's thoughts on freedom, as well as view and explore meanings of key documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.
- **First Amendment Freedoms:** A review of the five freedoms contained within the First Amendment. Interactive displays encourage visitors to make their own judgments on several important Supreme Court cases.
- **Freedom for All?:** A series of six case studies that reveal how select social movements, such as Abolition of Slavery, Women's Suffrage and the Labor Movement, used the First Amendment to secure other freedoms.
- **Marketplace of Ideas:** A demonstrative exhibit showing how free and open flow of information is critical to the democratic process. Visitors will discover which presidents placed reporters in jail for disagreeing with policies, see censored symbols and listen to a series of songs that were once challenged and discover why they were banned.
- **Close to Home:** Visitors will be asked where they draw the line between preserving individual freedom and protecting the common good. The exhibit presents hypothetical scenarios and challenges visitors to make decisions about the limits they would tolerate and measure the consequences of their decisions.
- **Future of Freedom:** An interactive learning environment where visitors can learn about issues of freedom throughout the world, access timely news feeds, take quizzes and create their own Bill of Rights.
- **What Does Freedom Mean?:** Visitors will be invited to become a part the exhibit by recording their thoughts on freedom for all to see and hear.

### **Museum Special Features:**

- **"12151791":** Named after the ratification date of the Bill of Rights, this two-story sculpture features 800 hanging silver plates inscribed with quotes on freedom from everyday people over a course of 215 years of American history, from the ratification date to the present.
- **Media Wall:** A visually arresting exhibit standing eight feet tall and 30 feet wide with 16 large screens that display images of diverse people exercising and celebrating freedom.
- **Freedom Theater:** A 30-seat theater that presents an inspiring movie of everyday people who defended their freedoms.
- **Temporary Exhibit Area:** A gallery for temporary exhibitions and museum programs to further shape and diversify discourse on freedom. The inaugural exhibit "For Which It Stands" debuts Memorial Day weekend 2006. Curated by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, the exhibit explores the diverse and often contested meanings of our national symbol - the American flag.

### **Education Efforts**

The Freedom Museum will also serve as a resource for teachers and students across the country by offering a comprehensive education program that includes curriculum, student activities, field trips and distance-learning opportunities.

"Since our education curriculum was developed in tandem with the museum's content, a visit to the museum reinforces what students learn in the classroom," Anderson said. "The museum is yet another tool teachers can use to create a more robust learning experience."

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The curriculum was developed in partnership with the Bill of Rights Institute and is aligned with Illinois Educational State Standards. All lesson plans have been reviewed by leading academic experts and were piloted in a number of classrooms across the nation. The curriculum will be available for download at the museum Web site beginning in April 2006.

To ensure academic scholarship of the exhibition, the museum tapped into leading experts and educators on freedom and the First Amendment. The core team included Linda Monk, award-winning author and constitutional scholar; Charles Haynes, senior scholar with the First Amendment Center; and Alison Rostenkowski, researcher, documentarian and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee adjunct professor.

A 15-person panel was created to assist in defining museum exhibits and related programming. In addition, a 17-person teacher advisory panel provided insight and made certain that the exhibits resonated with students and complied with education requirements.

The McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum was created and funded by the McCormick Tribune Foundation to commemorate its 50th anniversary and to provide an inspiring public service for America's youngest citizens. The museum is a living manifestation of the foundation's commitment to investing in our children, communities and country. It honors the three passions of the foundation's benefactor, Col. Robert McCormick: defending the First Amendment, civic engagement and the city of Chicago.

Located at 445 N. Michigan Ave. in Chicago's Tribune Tower, the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum opens its doors on April 11, 2006. Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day of the week, except Tuesdays and select holidays. Final tickets will be sold at 5:30 p.m. Admission is \$5. Children five and under are free. For more information, visit [www.FreedomMuseum.us](http://www.FreedomMuseum.us).

### **About the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum**

The McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum inspires generations to better understand, value and protect freedom. Through interactive exploration, visitors gain a greater understanding of the struggle for freedom in the United States and the role the First Amendment plays in society. The McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum is part of the McCormick Tribune Foundation team, which also includes the Robert R. McCormick Museum, Cantigny Park and Golf, the Cantigny First Division Foundation and five grant making programs.

A focus on children, communities and country binds the Foundation and its many parts and keeps us true to our mission of advancing the ideals of a free and democratic society. To learn more, please visit [www.mccormicktribune.org](http://www.mccormicktribune.org).

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