

For Immediate Release

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CHARACTERS FROM “THE SIMPSONS” MORE WELL KNOWN TO AMERICANS THAN THEIR FIRST AMENDMENT FREEDOMS, SURVEY FINDS

McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum in Chicago Aims to Improve Americans’ Understanding and Appreciation of Freedom

CHICAGO, March 1, 2006 – Civics teachers nationwide are letting out a collective, “Doh!”

A new McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum survey finds that only about one in four Americans (28 percent) is able to name more than one of the five fundamental freedoms guaranteed to them by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Yet when it comes to knowledge of popular culture, Americans are considerably more tuned in. For example, almost twice as many Americans (52 percent) can name at least two members of “The Simpsons” cartoon family.

And while more than one in five (22 percent) Americans can name all five of the fictional Simpsons family members – Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie – just one in 1,000 people surveyed (.1 percent) was able to name all five freedoms guaranteed under the First Amendment.

Although about two thirds were able to name Freedom of Speech as a First Amendment right, relatively few could recall other essential freedoms guaranteed by this amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

And at a time when the American press is under increasing scrutiny, it is discouraging to see that only about one in 10 people (11 percent) recalled Freedom of the Press. Those freedoms, and the percentage of Americans who were able to name them when asked to list the freedoms of the First Amendment, are:

- Freedom of Speech (69 percent)
- Freedom of Religion (24 percent)
- Freedom of the Press (11 percent)
- Freedom of Assembly (10 percent)
- Freedom to Petition for Redress of Grievances (1 percent)

The survey findings underscore the need for the new McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum, which opens its doors on April 11, 2006 on Chicago’s famed Michigan Avenue. The museum will be the nation’s first museum dedicated to helping people – especially teenagers – understand freedoms with a focus on those guaranteed by the First Amendment.

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“These survey results clearly demonstrate that many Americans don’t have an understanding of the freedoms they regularly enjoy. The Freedom Museum is designed to inspire people to understand and value their freedoms,” said Dave Anderson, executive director, McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum. “The Freedom Museum will present freedoms in not merely a historical context, but in modern day examples, allowing people young and old to relate to modern day freedom debates.”

Similar results were seen when comparing Americans’ knowledge of the First Amendment to that of the hit Fox Television show “American Idol.” More than four in 10 Americans (41 percent) could name two of the three “American Idol” judges and one in four could name all three. Unfortunately, just 8 percent of Americans could name at least three of their First Amendment freedoms.

When presented with a list of rights, Americans also misidentified various other rights as coming from the First Amendment. For instance, a majority of Americans (55 percent) believe the right to trial by jury was guaranteed by the First Amendment, when it is guaranteed by the Seventh Amendment.

Ironically, more than one-third of Americans (38 percent) incorrectly believe that the right against self-incrimination at trial – commonly called “taking the 5th Amendment” because that is its source – is a right guaranteed by the First Amendment. Also, more than one third (36 percent) believe the First Amendment guarantees women the right to vote, a right not obtained until 1920 and contained in the 19th Amendment.

Americans also think they have rights that aren’t necessarily guaranteed at all. About one in five Americans (21 percent) agreed that the First Amendment guaranteed them the right to own and raise pets, something that isn’t discussed anywhere in the U.S. Constitution or Bill of Rights. One in five also believe that the right to drive is guaranteed by the First Amendment, although the car was not invented for another 100 years.

The random telephone survey of 1,000 American adults was conducted Jan. 20-22, 2006 by Synovate, an independent market research firm. The margin of error due to sampling for a sample of this size at the 95th percent confidence level is +/- 3 percentage points. A full report on the survey results is available at the Freedom Museum Web site – www.FreedomMuseum.us.

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 county. 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, the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum opens its doors in April. 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.

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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.

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