



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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WHITE ANNOUNCES PROGRAM TO HONOR BICENTENNIAL OF LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY

SPRINGFIELD—Secretary of State and State Librarian/Archivist Jesse White announced today that the Illinois State Archives and Illinois State Library have embarked on a multifaceted promotional campaign to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln on February 12, 2009.

“One year from now, our nation will celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of Illinois’ greatest son and our nation’s greatest President,” White said. “The Illinois State Archives and Illinois State Library have many connections to Abraham Lincoln, and the Secretary of State’s office is proud to help mark this important birthday celebration by making the public, and especially our schoolchildren, aware of Lincoln’s greatness.”

White said most citizens are probably not aware that Abraham Lincoln was the first person to borrow a book from the Illinois State Library in 1842. Lincoln is also the only U.S. President to be awarded a patent, a replica of which is on file at the State Library’s Patent and Trademark Library. The Illinois State Archives holds a number of Lincoln documents, many written in Lincoln’s hand. The Illinois Digital Archives (IDA), a repository of the Illinois State Library’s digital collections, contains books and documents about the life, political career, and assassination of Abraham Lincoln. IDA has recently digitized the State Archives’ collection of Lincoln documents, which can be accessed at www.idaillinois.org.

The promotional campaign has kicked off with an essay contest for students in grades 5-12. Students are encouraged to write a modern day version of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, reflecting their personal thoughts and dreams about where America is as a nation, and their ideals for freedom, democracy and equal opportunity. Winners and their parents or guardians will come to Springfield for an awards presentation in conjunction with the bicentennial celebration next February. Winners will read their essays at the awards ceremony, tour the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, and receive a plaque and cash award. Winning essays will also be published in the 2009 Handbook of Illinois Government.

Other components of the promotional campaign will include:

- A series of six collectible bookmarks with notable trivia about Lincoln;
- A colorful poster that will be sent to schools and libraries;
- A display in the Secretary of State’s tent at the 2008 and 2009 Illinois State Fair;
- Flagpole banners that will be displayed around the State Library and State Archives in Springfield;
- Informational packets that will be provided to teachers for classroom use.

White thanked the Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Center for the Book for co-sponsoring the student essay competition. The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and the Lincoln Illinois Bicentennial Commission have also endorsed the contest. The Lincoln Illinois Bicentennial Commission has also awarded a \$3,153 grant to the State Library to help pay for flagpole banners. Essay contest forms have been sent to all Illinois public and private elementary and secondary schools. Forms may also be downloaded at:

http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/publications/pdf_publications/lincolnessay.pdf.