



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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WHITE ANNOUNCES STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST TO MARK LINCOLN BIRTHDAY BICENTENNIAL

SPRINGFIELD—Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White is encouraging students in grades 5-12 to read President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and take part in a statewide essay contest to mark the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

"In November 1863, President Lincoln was invited to say 'a few appropriate remarks' at the dedication of a cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, which would be the final resting place for more than 50,000 Americans who died in the Civil War," White said. "Our nation was divided between North and South, and in fewer than 300 words President Lincoln made what has become one of the most revered speeches ever written.

"In 300 words or less, this essay contest represents an opportunity for students to share their personal thoughts and dreams about where we are as a nation, and their ideals for freedom, democracy and equal opportunity."

The Illinois Center for the Book, for which White serves as Honorary Chair, will select judges to determine first, second and third place winning essays in three competition levels: grades 5-6, grades 7-8 and grades 9-12.

The Illinois State Library will send winners and their parents or guardians to Springfield for an awards presentation in conjunction with the bicentennial celebration of Lincoln's birthday on February 12, 2009. Winners will read their essays at the awards ceremony, tour the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, and receive a plaque and cash award: \$200 for first place, \$150 for second place and \$100 for third place. Winning essays will also be published in the 2009 Handbook of Illinois Government.

The deadline to submit essays is **May 31, 2008**. Winners will be notified in December 2008. Essay 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.

The Illinois State Library, Illinois State Archives, Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Center for the Book are co-sponsoring the competition. The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and the Lincoln Illinois Bicentennial Commission have also endorsed the contest. For more information about the essay contest, contact Bonnie Matheis at 217-558-2065 or bmatheis@ilsos.net.

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