

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contacts:

Merissa Blum, 215-409-6645, mblum@constitutioncenter.orgAlex Farbenblum, 212-981-5173, Alexandra_Farbenblum@dkcnews.com**FREEDOM DAY AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER EXPLORES THE CHALLENGES FACING THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM IN A POLARIZED AGE**

Philadelphia, PA (April 11, 2017) – The National Constitution Center’s third annual Freedom Day celebration on Thursday, April 13, 2017, will feature the nation’s top thought-leaders in law, media, education, government, and business exploring what James Madison would have thought of American democracy today.

The invite-only evening symposium will launch a new bipartisan national commission: *A Madisonian Constitution for All*. The Commission will ask what Madison and the other Framers of the U.S. Constitution would have thought of our current presidency, Congress, courts, and media, and how we can resurrect Madisonian values of constitutionalism, public reason, and the rule of law in a populist age. To ensure bipartisan participation, the Commission will be co-chaired by the National Constitution Center’s visiting Congressional scholars, Mike Lee (R-UT) and Chris Coons (D-DE) from the Senate, and Justin Amash (R-MI) and Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) from the House. It will also be co-chaired by Lee Otis, Senior Vice President of The Federalist Society, and Caroline Fredrickson, President of the American Constitution Society. The Commission will include senators, representatives, executive branch officials, judges, journalists, and thought-leaders from different perspectives, including conservatives, progressives, and classical liberals.

Freedom Day will feature Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist George F. Will, New York Times, Co. CEO Mark Thompson, *Wall Street Journal* Weekend Review editor Gary Rosen, and leaders whose organizations span the ideological spectrum, from the ACLU to the Heritage Foundation to the Aspen Institute.

“We are thrilled that this remarkable group of thought-leaders will join us” said Jeffrey Rosen, President and CEO of the National Constitution Center. “This year’s Freedom Day will engage citizens and scholars across America to ask what Madison would have thought of our current Congress, presidency, courts, and media, and how we can revive Madisonian values – such as constitutionalism, individual liberty, and limited government – in the face of populist threats online and around the globe. By hosting national discussions about Madisonian values, we hope to promote the public reason and deliberation that Madison believed was the precondition for the success of the American republic.”

Panel topics & featured speakers include:

4:45 – 5:15 PM *The Fourth Estate: The Future of the Media in a Post-Truth Society*

James Madison believed that the American republic would fail unless new media technologies – including the broadside press – encouraged public deliberation, based on facts and reason. And yet today, social media technologies are balkanizing citizens into filter bubbles and echo chambers so that agreement on facts seems increasingly elusive. What would James Madison – who gave us the First Amendment – think of how the media today is working to promote public reason, while also serving as a crucial check on executive and congressional power?

- Mark Thompson, CEO, New York Times, Co.
- Gary Rosen, Editor, Weekend Review, *The Wall Street Journal*
- Dafna Linzer, Managing Editor, Politics, NBC News and MSNBC
- Moderator: Jeffrey Rosen, President and CEO, National Constitution Center

5:15 – 5:45 PM *The Least Dangerous Branch: The Future of Judicial Independence in a Polarized Age*
Alexander Hamilton believed that the judiciary would be the “least dangerous branch” because judges had neither purse nor sword. Today, however politicians of both parties are attacking judicial decisions with which they disagree in personal terms. How can we preserve judicial independence in a polarized age and how vigorous a role should courts play in enforcing Madisonian checks on the president and Congress?

- Judge Timothy Tymkovich, Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit
- Judge Ransey Guy Cole Jr., Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit
- Moderator: Judge Jeremy Fogel, Director of the Federal Judicial Center in Washington, D.C.

5:45 – 6:00 PM Break

6:00 – 6:30 PM *The Broken Branch: Congress and the Constitution*

James Madison anticipated that Congress would be the most dangerous branch in threatening liberty because it had more enumerated powers than the presidency or the judiciary. And yet Madison and the other Framers assumed that the limited nature of Congress’ powers would ensure the survival of liberty. They also anticipated that Congress would play a crucial role in checking the president and keeping him within his constitutionally assigned powers. Today, however, polarization, threats to the filibuster, and a desire to abdicate hard constitutional questions to the courts have led Congress to abdicate its constitutional responsibilities to check the president. And judicial decisions have allowed Congress to expand its powers beyond what some of the Framers may have anticipated. What would Madison think of Congress today and how can Congress perform the constitutional functions in protecting rather than threatening liberty that the Framers anticipated?

- Mickey Edwards, Director, Aspen Institute Rodel Program
- Norm Ornstein, American Enterprise Institute, co-author of *The Broken Branch*
- Moderator: Jeffrey Rosen, President and CEO, National Constitution Center

6:30 – 7:00 PM *The Imperial Presidency vs. the Constitution?*

The Framers of the Constitution created a presidency strong enough to command the troops and grant pardons but constrained enough not to be a king. President Taft stressed that the president could only do what the Constitution explicitly authorized. And yet ever since President Theodore Roosevelt, presidents of both parties have asserted the power to do anything the Constitution doesn’t explicitly forbid, including issuing executive orders that arguably transgress the Constitution. Has the imperial presidency outstripped the constraints the Framers expected would protect liberty, and should those constraints be resurrected by Congress and the courts?

- John Malcolm, Director Edwin Meese III Center for Legal and Judicial Studies, The Heritage Foundation
- Susan Herman, President, ACLU
- John Harrison, James Madison Distinguished Professor of Law, University of Virginia School of Law
- *Moderator: Jeffrey Rosen, President and CEO, National Constitution Center*

7:00 – 7:30 PM **Keynote Address: *The Madisonian Constitution and the Future of Freedom***

- George F. Will, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist

7:30 – 9:00 PM Reception

The entire event will be livestreamed on the National Constitution Center's website at constitutioncenter.org/live.

Visitors of all ages can celebrate Freedom Day at the National Constitution Center by participating in a variety of special programs and activities throughout the day. In addition to the events at the Center, the National Constitution Center encourages civil dialogue and debate through participation in the classroom, on campus, or in your community. A full list of visitor programs available at the museum, educational resources, and ways to participate can be found at constitutioncenter.org/freedom-day.

About Freedom Day

Freedom Day was launched on April 13, 2015 at the National Constitution Center, headquartered on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, bringing together an unprecedented, ideologically diverse group of the nation's leading thinkers for conversations on the future of freedom. The goal of Freedom Day is to encourage citizens of all ages, across the country — in classrooms, on college campuses, and in local communities — to take time to explore and appreciate their unique freedoms as Americans.

About the National Constitution Center

The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia inspires citizenship as the only place where people across America and around the world can come together to learn about, debate, and celebrate the greatest vision of human freedom in history, the U.S. Constitution. A private, nonprofit organization, the Center serves as America's leading platform for constitutional education and debate, fulfilling its Congressional charter "to disseminate information about the U.S. Constitution on a nonpartisan basis." As the **Museum of We the People**, the Center brings the Constitution to life for visitors of all ages through interactive programs and exhibits. As **America's Town Hall**, the Center brings the leading conservative and liberal thought leaders together to debate the Constitution on all media platforms. As a center for **Civic Education**, the Center delivers the best educational programs and online resources that inspire, excite, and engage citizens about the U.S. Constitution. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit constitutioncenter.org.

###