



STATE LIBRARY OF OHIO NEWS RELEASE
State Library of Ohio to host “Forever Free” traveling exhibition

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Contact: Marsha McDevitt-Stredney
Director, Marketing & Communications
State Library of Ohio
614-644-6875 or marshams@library.ohio.gov

Editor: Please do not delete sponsorship credits in paragraph two.

(Columbus, Ohio) – Why did a nation founded on ideals of freedom and equality tolerate for so long one of the harshest labor systems the world has known? A traveling exhibition opening at the State Library of Ohio on March 7, 2011 looks for answers to this question by tracing Abraham Lincoln’s gradual transformation from an antislavery moderate into “The Great Emancipator,” who began the process to free all slaves with a revolutionary war-time proclamation in 1863. “Forever Free: Abraham Lincoln’s Journey to Emancipation” will be on display at the library until **April 15, 2011**.

Organized by the Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif., and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, New York City, in cooperation with the American Library Association (ALA), this traveling exhibition is made possible through major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, created by Congress and charged with planning the national celebration of Lincoln’s 200th birthday.

“We are pleased to have been selected as a site for this timely exhibition,” said State Librarian Beverly Cain. “The exhibit coincides with the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War and Ohio Statehouse Sesquicentennial celebration. In addition, several titles in the Choose to Read Ohio lists are related to anti-slavery and the civil war. President Lincoln and Ohio’s role in the Civil War and anti-slavery movement must be remembered in order to help 21st century Ohioans better understand our place in history and how these events shape our lives today.

The Forever Free exhibit offers Ohioans an opportunity to learn more about how the long and brutal Civil War influenced Abraham Lincoln’s decision on emancipation of the slaves. The exhibit



reveals how Lincoln’s values and beliefs guided him through the greatest moral conflict of his time to become one of our greatest Presidents.”

Abraham Lincoln was an obscure Illinois lawyer and politician of humble origins who rose in an astonishingly short time to world renown as the leader of a young nation during one of its most troubled times. Throughout his life, Lincoln’s dedication to the ideals of freedom and equality for all people did not waver. “I want every man to have the chance—and I believe a black man is entitled to it—in which he can better his condition,” he said early in his career.

Lincoln was also a pragmatic politician who believed that a direct attack on slavery in the South would split the Union and end America’s experiment in self-government. He steered a middle course during the early years of the Civil War but became convinced that ending slavery would help the Union. Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation transformed the character of the war by re-committing the nation to its founders’ vision of freedom and equality for all.

“Forever Free” draws upon original documents in the collections of the Huntington Library and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. It was curated by John Rhodehamel, Norris Foundation Curator of American historical manuscripts at the Huntington Library.

The State Library of Ohio will also display historical documents, artifacts and the winning artwork from a poster contest with students at Columbus College of Art and Design. An opening reception and free program will be held on March 9, 2011 at 5:30-7:30. The State Library will provide additional programs for schools and groups from the public in connection with the exhibition. The State Library of Ohio is hosting the exhibit in collaboration with Ohioana, Ohio Historical Society, Kelton House, Ohio Department of Education, the Columbus Metropolitan Library, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Ohio State University, local historians and others. The State Library of Ohio is open Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. Contact Marsha McDevitt-Stredney at 614-644-6875 or marshams@library.ohio.gov for more information.