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Despite huge nationwide participation, simultaneous Gettysburg Address reading falls short of world record

*Another simultaneous reading of Lincoln's words will be tried in
two years for the Civil War Sesquicentennial*

SPRINGFIELD – Even though it fell more than four score and seven thousand short of setting a new world record, the simultaneous reading of the Gettysburg Address on Abraham Lincoln's 200th birthday is being hailed a success by organizers, who will attempt a similar feat in two years for the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

“We held the nation's attention for those two minutes on February 12 as people of all ages and backgrounds joined together to read Lincoln's immortal words,” said Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, who led the reading from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield. “The Gettysburg Address reading combined literacy and history in an event that brought together people of all ages and backgrounds and reminded us of what it truly means to be an American.”

The Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission estimates that approximately 180,000 people took part in the simultaneous reading at 9:30 a.m. Central Time on February 12, which was carried via live webcast. The official record established in 2006 and recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records remains at 223,363. So far, Bicentennial officials have received official documentation from more than 38,810 individuals who submitted the required paperwork for the world record attempt. The documentation was not required for participation, but it is the only way to verify a new world record. The estimated 180,000 participation is based on the number of advance registrations and the 44,454 page views logged during the live webcast.

The live reading, entitled the “Four Score and Seven Project,” was made possible by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation and the Illinois State Board of Education, and sponsored by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, JPMorgan Chase and The Chicago Community Trust. Participating Illinois students received a commemorative poster from which they read on February 12.

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Organizers at the Presidential Museum are already planning the next world record attempt, this time to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. Abraham Lincoln's Farewell Address to Springfield, delivered as he left his hometown as President-elect, will be read live on the 150th anniversary of the speech, February 11, 2011. Lincoln's election as president was one of the major events leading to the start of the Civil War, which began with the bombardment of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861.

The simultaneous reading of the Gettysburg Address was one of many events held in Illinois to commemorate Lincoln's 200th birthday. Other popular activities included new art exhibits, commemorative wreath layings at Lincoln Tomb, music and theater productions, new postage stamp issuances, all-night viewing of Lincoln documents, Lincoln author events, a simultaneous bell ringing, a Civil War period ball, and a visit by President Barack Obama.

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