

America and the world. Coordinating many of these events will be the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, which I am honored to cochair with Harold Holzer, a noted Lincoln scholar from New York, and my fellow Illinoisan, Representative Ray LaHood. Ray deserves special credit because it was his idea to create this commission to honor Illinois's favorite son in our land of Lincoln. For 12 years before I was elected to the Senate I had the privilege of holding the same seat Lincoln once held in the U.S. House of Representatives, a seat now held by Congressman LAHOOD.

Abraham Lincoln was, I believe, America's greatest President. Our Founders decreed that we are all endowed with an inalienable right to liberty, but they could not reconcile their noble ideals with the ignoble practice of slavery. Abraham Lincoln helped give meaning to our national creed of "liberty and justice for all." He steered America through the most profound moral crisis in our history and the bloodiest war. His leadership saved the Union, and his vision redefined what it meant to be an American.

The goal of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission is to help Americans and people around the world to gain a better understanding of this complex and heroic man. We want to foster a resolve among Americans from all backgrounds to continue the work Abraham Lincoln started. I think the Gettysburg Address may be the greatest speech I have ever read. I memorized it in grade school. I refer to it so many times, and realize, in an economy of words, Abraham Lincoln speaking almost impromptu really captured great meaning for so many Americans. He challenged all of us to rededicate our lives "to the unfinished work" for which "the brave men, living and dead" had sacrificed so much on the hallowed ground of battle in Gettysburg, PA.

How much of the work of true democracy remains unfinished today? How can we summon, as Lincoln said, "the better angels of our nature" to meet the challenges of our time? Those are the discussions the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission hopes to foster as America prepares to celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of its greatest President.

I encourage everyone to go to the Commission's Web site at [www.lincolnbicentennial.com](http://www.lincolnbicentennial.com), learn more about Lincoln and about how your community can plan to celebrate his birthday. President Lincoln's adopted hometown of Springfield is also my adopted hometown. I have lived there almost 40 years now. If you have ever been there, you know that around every corner in downtown Springfield is another powerful reminder of Abe Lincoln. The small house at the corner of 8th and Jackson, the only home Lincoln ever owned, is just a block away from my Senate office. His law office, right near the old

State capitol, is an amazing place, restored and visited by so many because of its meaning in his daily life as an ordinary lawyer in central Illinois, the old State capitol building where he warned prophetically that a House divided could not stand. This beautiful building was restored in 1976 as part of our bicentennial. The old State capitol is one of my favorite in the State of Illinois.

My special thanks to a good friend of mine, an architect named Earl Wallace Henderson III, who was called on to do a magnificent job of restoring and remodeling that old State capitol. And now, just a couple blocks away, my pride and joy as an elected official from Springfield, IL, is the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. It is just 3 years old. It is already the most visited Presidential library in America. I love that place. I go to a lot of museums and Presidential museums. I don't know of another one, though, that really captures the spirit of the President so effectively and lures children in for beautiful exhibits and movies that they don't forget. Kids walk out of the Abraham Lincoln Museum with their moms and dads and say: Can we go back? It warms my heart every time I hear of the record numbers of people who are visiting.

It was also in Springfield that a 28-year-old Lincoln, a member of the State legislature, delivered a speech that still speaks powerfully to us today. We know it as the Lyceum Address. Lincoln was told to speak about whatever he liked. He chose as his subject "the perpetuation of our political institutions." He expressed a concern that would later be echoed many times: What would happen to America when its Founding Fathers and those who fought to gain our liberty were gone? How could we sustain America if new generations had no knew leaders to inspire them with original ideas of our Republic? Until then, the truth and terrible costs of America's revolution could always be seen—in Lincoln's words—"in the form of a husband, a father, a son or a brother. . . . A living history was to be found in every family . . . in the limbs mangled, [and] in the scars of wounds received. . . ."

Lincoln went on to say:

But those histories are gone. They were the pillars of liberty; and now that they have crumbled away, that temple must fall—unless we, their descendants, supply their place with other pillars.

I would like to think that Lincoln would be relieved if he could see this great Nation today. We are 170 years further removed from our Founders than we were when the young Lincoln spoke those words at the Lyceum, but America is still filled with patriots who know and are willing to defend our founding principles. There are many of us, and we are vastly more diverse than the Americans of Lincoln's time, but there is still in us a deep and passionate longing to be one nation, one people, undivided.

We saw a glimpse of that desire in the dark days after 9/11. Sometimes we wondered if we could ever recover that sense of national unity and purpose. But look what is happening today. There is a deep longing in America today to transcend old divisions in order to meet our new challenges. It is a longing that goes far beyond political parties and labels of all kinds. We have not forgotten the principles on which our Nation was founded, nor have we forgotten the lessons Abraham Lincoln taught us. Our unity is our strength. Together we can overcome any challenge. We can finish the unfinished work of America and become a "more perfect union."

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### REMEMBERING CONGRESSMAN TOM LANTOS

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, California and the entire Nation lost a remarkable leader yesterday with the passing of my friend, Congressman TOM LANTOS.

From his leadership as chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs to his founding of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Congressman LANTOS went about his work with a dignity and a seriousness that transcended politics. In a time of bitter divisions, he earned the respect of colleagues from both sides of the aisle.

As a survivor of the Holocaust, Congressman LANTOS brought to Congress a profound personal commitment to human rights. We will remember not only his courage and his optimism, but also his deep affection for his adopted country. He leaves behind a legacy of hope and inspiration.

On a personal level, it was an honor to call TOM a colleague and a friend. I was proud to work with him on so many important issues.

I remember working with him to secure funding to build a tunnel to bypass a section of Route 1 that was so frequently closed by landslides that it was known as "Devil's Slide." It took years, but they broke ground on the tunnel in November. And it is a fitting tribute to the passion with which he served his constituents that there is a bill before the State senate to name that tunnel in his honor.

Congressman LANTOS was a true statesman, and we will miss him. My heart goes out to his family during this time of grief. They are in our thoughts and in our prayers.

#### APPROPRIATIONS EARMARKS

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, on October 23, 2007, Senator DEMINT and I