

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 16, 2008

SUPREME COURT TO MEET IN HISTORIC LINCOLN COURTHOUSE

The Illinois Supreme Court will meet in formal session and hear oral arguments Thursday in a historic courthouse in Mt. Vernon as part of events honoring the state's most venerable lawyer, Abraham Lincoln.

Arguments will be heard in two cases on Thursday, September 18 beginning at 1 p.m. With new Chief Justice Thomas R. Fitzgerald presiding, the seven justices will be seated and hear arguments in the same courtroom where Lincoln argued before the Supreme Court 149 years earlier.

The courthouse was used by the Illinois Supreme Court from 1857 until 1897, when the Court was consolidated in Springfield. The Mt. Vernon courthouse is still the regular home of the Fifth District Illinois Appellate Court which in the 1800s shared the building with the Supreme Court.

Lincoln argued a significant tax case before the Supreme Court on November 18 and 19 in 1859. He represented the Illinois Central Railroad, a leading corporation in the state, and won a tax reduction from \$13 million to \$4.9 million for the railroad.

Among those who witnessed Lincoln's lawyering in the courtroom was George B. McClellan, then a vice president of the Illinois Central Railroad. Within a few years, both men would command world attention—one as President of the United States and the other as a General of the Union Army.

"It is a great honor to be part of a program that celebrates Abraham Lincoln and his life as an Illinois lawyer, who practiced in this historic courthouse in Mt. Vernon," said Chief Justice Fitzgerald.

A full day's program will mark the 150th anniversary of the building and be a precursor to next year's bicentennial celebration of Lincoln's birth.

In the morning, the Illinois State Bar Association is sponsoring a panel presentation of Lincoln scholars talking about "Lincoln the Lawyer". That presentation will be moderated by former Gov. Jim Edgar.

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The Supreme Court will hear arguments in the afternoon, one of the few times if not the only time, the Court has heard arguments outside of Springfield or Chicago since the Supreme Court was consolidated in Springfield in 1897. The cases the Supreme Court will hear are People v. Lavar Bridgewater and People v. Martez Harris, both on appeal from the Third District Appellate Court.

At 3:30 p.m. there will be an unveiling of a 9-foot tall bronze statue of Lincoln sculpted by Alan Cottrill of Zanesville, Ohio. The public is invited to the unveiling of the statue.

Speakers at the event will include Chief Justice Fitzgerald, Jack C. Carey, president of the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA) and Mark D. Hassakis, of Mt. Vernon, second vice president of the ISBA.

Mr. Hassakis was instrumental in creating Mt. Vernon's Abraham Lincoln Sculpture Project and raising funds to cover its costs.

Seating in the courtroom is limited, and media coverage of the arguments may be by pool report.

The arguments will be video recorded by the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, and will be available the following day on the Supreme Court's website at www.state.il.us/court.

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**(FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Joseph Tybor, press secretary to the
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