

## Press Release

### **National Constitution Center in Philadelphia hosts the Swiss “Bundesbrief”- The 715 Year Old Founding Contract of the Swiss Confederation, A Precursor to the US Declaration of Independence**

***Philadelphia, PA – May 17, 2006 - The Swiss Federal Charter, known as the “Schweizer Bundesbrief,” will be shown in its first-time-ever departure from Switzerland at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia in a 3-week exhibition of “Sister Republics” depicting the bonds of democratic tradition between Switzerland and the United States.***

***In turn, Pennsylvanians sent their own Ben Roethlisberger, quarterback of the Superbowl-winning Pittsburgh Steelers, to Switzerland tracing the roots of his ancestors who lived in the Bernese Emmentaler, source of the famous Swiss cheese. These and other events such as a Swiss immigration exhibition at New York’s Ellis Island Museum are part of “Swiss Roots,” a Switzerland promotion program for the U.S. which aims to bring Americans and Swiss closer together.***

“We are very proud to have been selected for the honor of hosting the maiden voyage of the Swiss Bundesbrief and we extend our sincere thanks to the Swiss people for loaning us their most treasured founding constitutional contract,” said Rick Stengel, President of the National Constitution Center. “It will be displayed in our main exhibition ‘The Story of We the People’, adjacent to the Preamble of the US Constitution so that viewers can appreciate the strong republican and democratic ties between our two nations.”

The National Constitution Center in Philadelphia was selected as the perfect location to host the first departure of the “Bundesbrief” from its home place of Schwyz, Switzerland, because of its high-security provisions, its mission of interpretation of national archives, and the strong support of its museum leadership and staff. One of the highest densities of Swiss immigration into America occurred in the Philadelphia area and thus the central location of the National Constitution Center will provide an excellent viewer impact.

“The vision of ‘Swiss Roots’ is to motivate all Americans who feel an affinity with Switzerland to connect with our country and to network with the Swiss people,” says Ambassador Raymond Loretan, Co-Chairman of “Swiss Roots” and Consul General of Switzerland in New York. “There is no more important single document that we could send to America than the Bundesbrief; and we feel certain it will strike a chord of pride and generate renewed interest within our American-Swiss constituency. To supplement this outreach program, we have developed the “Swiss Roots” website, [www.swissroots.org](http://www.swissroots.org), which offers Swiss descendents the opportunity to explore their Swiss roots and ancestry in just a few mouse clicks.”

The “Bundesbrief” is unveiled on Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup>, at the exhibit’s opening at the National Constitution Center which features ribbon cutting and visits of dignitaries from both sides of the Atlantic. Participating in a Town Hall forum discussion of constitutional topics will be former US Ambassador to Switzerland Faith Ryan Whittlesey, Former Swiss Federal Councilor Arnold Koller, and enlivened by the personage of Thomas Jefferson (who will describe how he chose some key Swiss wording for his writing of the US Declaration of Independence). The event will be moderated by Jill Cherekoff, President of Cherekoff Communications and veteran TV news anchor. Highlighting the festivities is a salute from Washington DC based “Swiss Rifles” corps, a First City Troop Color Guard, solidarity march of the Pennsylvania Sons of the Revolution and lampion welcome to the Bundesbrief and former Federal Councilor Arnold Koller.

This day-long kick off event will include a display of famous Swiss canine breeds such as St. Bernard and Bernese Mountain Dogs, Swiss Chocolatiers, Swiss American Philatelic Society, alphorn players and yodlers. The day will be capped by an evening soiree in the Center's Delegates Restaurant including Swiss foods and cultural dance music provided by musicians flown in directly from Switzerland for this event.

Visitors to the National Constitution Center can view the Swiss Bundesbrief as part of their regular museum admission of \$9 for adults, and \$7 for children ages 4-12, seniors, college students, and active military personnel.

Jet Aviation, a leading business aviation service company with international headquarters in Zurich and five facilities in the U.S., will transport the historic document within the U.S. on a highly secured business jet. Theo Staub, president and COO of Jet Aviation's U.S. operations, will accompany the flight and participate in the official installation ceremonies.

### **About "Swiss Roots"**

"Swiss Roots" brings the United States and Switzerland closer together through activities that foster dialogue, understanding, and both online and offline exchanges. The program's centerpiece, [www.swissroots.org](http://www.swissroots.org), is a state-of-the-art website that serves as a gateway for the one million Americans of Swiss descent to discover their ancestral roots and those with Swiss affinity to discover and communicate with people in Switzerland. The "Swiss Roots" website was launched officially on March 29 at the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, D.C., and will be online throughout 2006 and beyond.

Featuring various events throughout the United States, "Swiss Roots" will showcase nationwide the best in Swiss innovation, culture, history, education, and business. The project is organized by the Consulate General of Switzerland in New York and official Swiss representations in the U.S., in cooperation with numerous local Swiss associations. "Swiss Roots" is supported by Switzerland promotional agencies such as Presence Switzerland, Switzerland Tourism and Pro Helvetia. Swiss Roots is also supported by private sector companies such as Swiss Helvetia Fund, Swiss International Air Lines, Jet Aviation, Crown Holdings, Gallus and Swiss Post.

### **About the National Constitution Center**

Located at 525 Arch Street on Philadelphia's historic Independence Mall, the National Constitution Center is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and its relevance to Americans' daily lives. Opened on July 4, 2003, the museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". For more information, call (215) 409-6700 or visit [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org).

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