

Testimony Dr. Thomas F. Schwartz, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum Chairman Mica, Chairman Issa, Chairman Gowdy, and Members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on the mission and future direction of presidential libraries. My comments will focus on the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum [ALPLM], its current relationship to the National Archives and Records Administration [NARA] presidential library/museum system, and possible areas for further collaboration. This mirrors Abraham Lincoln's thinking when he declared, "If we could first know *where* we are, and *whither* we are tending, we could then better judge *what* to do, and *how* to do it."

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library was created in 1889 as the Illinois State Historical Library. Its mission was to collect the written history of the State of Illinois, an effort that also led to sizable holdings concerning its favorite son, Abraham Lincoln. Discussions since the 1980s on how to build a new facility for the library moved toward the larger concept of a library/museum complex. A federal, state, and local funding partnership was created to finance the \$167 million dollar complex, most of that provided by the State of Illinois. The library with the new name opened in October 2004, and the museum opened on April 19, 2005.

Of an FY2011 budget of \$12 million, the State of Illinois provides the largest source of revenue, with additional revenue streams provided by admission sales, parking and facility rental, and support from the 501(c)3 Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation [ALPLF]. The ALPLM has a staff of 66 full-time, 14 part-time, and more than 500 volunteers to maintain a 215,000-square-foot complex, under the administrative authority of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. With total visitation of more than

2.5 million people from more than 100 nations, since opening in 2005, the ALPLM has had annual attendance that surpasses any NARA presidential museum. Our programs range from temporary exhibits that have explored topics such as Lincoln's assassination, his views on agriculture, and his actions as president-elect, to author talks, historically based theatre offerings, teacher workshops, activities for young children, and conferences and symposia on Lincoln, slavery, and his times. Perhaps our most ambitious project is the Papers of Abraham Lincoln. Begun in 1985, this project has compiled and in 2009 placed online all of Abraham Lincoln's legal documents by case and issued a four-volume print edition of selections from his legal practice. Currently, the project is scanning every letter sent to Lincoln and every document he wrote, with the goal of placing the entire corpus of Lincoln's writings online. We hope to have the pre-presidential materials up by 2013 and the entire project completed by the end of this decade.

Our interactions with the NARA libraries/museums have been few but friendly. Most requests are for the loan of Lincoln materials for special exhibits. Several non-federal presidential museums being contemplated and one to be added to the NARA system have sent planning teams to see the ALPLM and imagine how its elements might be incorporated into their facilities. The ALPLM is known for being different from traditional museums, with its emphasis on a compelling narrative of Lincoln's life supported by creative uses of technology and immersive environments that actually place you within scenes from Lincoln's life. All of the senses are engaged, and the interactivity the visitor discovers is not that created by technology but rather the intellectual and emotional engagement he or she feels with the unfolding story of Lincoln's life. These

techniques inspired the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, for example, to incorporate many of them into their new orientation center and museum.

Everyone in this room acknowledges the importance of presidential libraries and museums as vital to preserving our national history while providing the general public with a broader and deeper understanding of our past. Moving forward, we see several areas of cooperation to consider: 1) sharing resources through the traditional loan of materials, digitization of collections, and extending both to joint exhibits with one or more presidential museum partners; 2) linking to one another's websites, utilizing satellite uplinks to offer joint programs, and providing comparative study and curriculum materials to encourage the public to explore the entirety of our presidential history and not simply that of one administration; 3) continuing the larger dialogue with presidential museums outside of the NARA system on issues common to all; finally, striving to be entrepreneurial in finding creative funding solutions to the long-term solvency issues facing all presidential libraries and museums. As Lincoln aptly reminds us, "The struggle of today, is not altogether for today—it is for a vast future also."

Thank you.