

## **Groups From Across the Political Spectrum Call on Presidential Candidates – and the Media – to Dedicate Constitution Day (September 17) to Addressing Constitutional Issues**

*National organizations including the Center for American Progress Action Fund, Human Rights Watch, and Common Cause add their voice to call*

### **Contact:**

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WASHINGTON – On Friday, September 12, a broad coalition of organizations from across the political spectrum will hold a press conference to urge presidential candidates and the media to dedicate Wednesday, September 17 – Constitution Day – to constitutional issues. Constitution Day is a day on which citizens, civil society groups, schools and government entities across the country organize events to celebrate the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787 and to promote understanding of its significance and meaning.

This year, an ideologically diverse coalition of civil society groups and think tanks from the human rights, civil liberties, environmental, civil rights, open government, limited government, and public interest communities have joined forces in a rare effort to foster respect for the U.S. Constitution by an incoming administration. Leading the effort are the American Freedom Campaign, World Resources Institute and the Liberty Coalition.

The organizations are calling on presidential candidates from all parties to describe their commitment and ability to "protect and defend the Constitution of the United States" as the next president. These groups recognize that presidents exercise a great deal of discretion and flexibility in interpreting the Constitution and that abuse of constitutional rights and safeguards can have significant harmful effects on the American people's lives. It is therefore essential, they assert, to understand where candidates stand on constitutional rights and the separation of powers prior to their election. These groups also believe it is the responsibility of the media to inform the public about the candidates' positions on constitutional issues and to press the candidates for their positions if they are unknown.

“Today, we see the two leading presidential candidates coming together to honor the victims of September 11,” said Steve Fox, campaign director for the American Freedom Campaign. “We hope that they, along with the other presidential candidates, will see September 17 as a similar opportunity to join together for an important anniversary. The Constitution is the foundation of our nation and deserves a day of its own on the campaign trail.”

In preparation for Constitution Day, the coalition of organizations will encourage campaigns and the media to focus on the following issues:

- Separation of powers and checks and balances
- Congressional oversight and executive branch accountability (including the executive branch's responsibility to comply with congressional subpoenas)
- The appropriate use of signing statements
- Torture and habeas corpus
- Electronic surveillance and Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA)
- Freedom of speech (as it applies to potential whistleblowers in the next administration)
- Other matters of personal freedom and privacy

## **PRESS CONFERENCE DETAILS**

**WHAT:** Press conference to unveil the Constitution Day on the Campaign Trail coalition

**WHEN:** Friday, September 12 at 10:30 am

**WHERE:** World Resources Institute, 10 G St. NE, Suite 800, Washington D.C.

**WHO:** **Robin Murphy**, Vice President for External Relations, World Resources Institute  
**Steve Fox**, campaign director, American Freedom Campaign  
**Michael Ratner**, President, Center for Constitutional Rights  
**Sarah Dufendach**, Vice President for Legislative Affairs, Common Cause  
**Dane Von Breichenruchardt**, American Conservative Defense Alliance  
**John Whitehead**, President and founder, Rutherford Institute

## **ORGANIZATIONS CALLING FOR CONSTITUTION DAY ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL:**

American Freedom Campaign

World Resources Institute

Liberty Coalition

Center for American Progress Action Fund

Center for Constitutional Rights

Human Rights Watch

Common Cause  
Public Citizen  
The Brennan Center for Justice  
Scientific Integrity Program, Union of Concerned Scientists  
National Lawyers Guild  
Equal Justice Society  
American Freedom Agenda  
The Rutherford Institute  
OMB Watch  
International Association of Whistleblowers (IAW)  
Transpartisan Center  
Republican Liberty Caucus  
Bill of Rights Defense Committee  
National Campaign to Restore Civil Rights  
Government Accountability Project  
OSC Watch  
American Conservative Defense Alliance  
Open The Government Coalition  
Project on Government Oversight  
America Speaks  
No FEAR Coalition  
Muslim Advocates  
Whistleblowers USA  
Defending Dissent Foundation  
Privacy Lives  
American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression  
Minnesota Coalition on Government Information  
Californians Aware  
National Coalition of Organized Women

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