

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Jefferson/Hamilton Debate Lives Again in the American Spirit Series**

-Scholars Bring Rival Revolutionaries to Life for a Passionate Quarrel about America Feb. 27-

DENVER – Amid 21<sup>st</sup> century qualms about war, taxes and the extent of government powers in challenging times, none other than Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton will take up their legendary debate about how to govern America as part of the AMERICAN SPIRIT SERIES on Thursday, February 27, 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., at historic Trinity Methodist Church in downtown Denver.

Two scholars, Dr. Clay S. Jenkinson as Jefferson, and Lt. Colonel Hal Bidlack of the United States Air Force Academy as Hamilton, will revisit the fierce and exciting debate between the two American Revolutionaries who first defined two opposing views of government, the forerunners of today's Democrat and Republican parties.

"Some of the most zealous arguments about the direction of our country took place between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton," said Maggie Coval, executive director of the Colorado Endowment for the Humanities (CEH), sponsor of the AMERICAN SPIRIT SERIES. "They'll tackle the issues of their day and, in a captivating twist, help us view today's times through the eyes of history."

Tickets, at \$25-\$40, are available through the CEH at 303-894-7951, ext. 18.

The event is the second of the AMERICAN SPIRIT SERIES, inaugurated last year with "An Evening with Thomas Jefferson," an event that drew more than 700 people. The two protagonists of this year's Jefferson/Hamilton Debate are noted scholars who are skilled in the "Chautauqua" tradition of dramatizing history in the character and costume of historical figures.

Jenkinson was the principal on-air commentator in Ken Burns' PBS series on Thomas Jefferson. Bidlack is associate professor of political science at the United States Air Force Academy and deputy director of the Institute for National Security Studies, as well as a Hamilton scholar.

The AMERICAN SPIRIT SERIES focuses on historic themes against a backdrop of renewed interest in American history and alarm at what educators are calling "historical amnesia." A new National Endowment for the Humanities initiative, "We the People," is working to bring attention to knowledge gaps among Americans, and especially high school and college students.

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For instance:

- In 2001, 60 percent of 8<sup>th</sup> graders could not say why American Colonists formed the First Continental Congress, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress “Report Card.”
- In the same study, results for 12th graders found more than half of high school seniors thought that Italy, Germany, or Japan was a U.S. ally in World War II.
- Two years ago a Roper poll by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni found 40 percent of students attending the nation’s top colleges and universities did not know when the Civil War occurred.

Said President George W. Bush about the “We the People” program, “Ignorance of American history and civics weakens our sense of citizenship. To be an American is not just a matter of blood or birth; we are bound by ideals, and our children must know those ideals.”

The AMERICAN SPIRIT SERIES will raise funds for the Colorado Endowment for the Humanities, the only nonprofit, statewide organization dedicated exclusively to supporting humanities education. The organization’s goal is to engage all Coloradans in the humanities, which include literature, history, philosophy, archaeology, art history and other related disciplines. Through NEH funds, CEH also provides grants to other Colorado nonprofits, helping extend humanities education and influence beyond the classrooms to a broader public.

-End It-

