

ADVISORY BOARD

THE PAPERS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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September 11, 2015

Hon. Bruce Rauner
Governor of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Hon. John J. Cullerton
President of the Senate
327 Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Hon. Michael J. Madigan
Speaker of the House
300 Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Gentlemen:

The undersigned are writing to express our profound disappointment over unwarranted actions taken last week by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (the "IHPA") concerning the Papers of Abraham Lincoln (the "PAL"). The IHPA's actions, unless immediately rescinded, will shut down the PAL, leaving its mission unfulfilled and its important work in jeopardy of being lost.

On September 3rd, Daniel W. Stowell, Director of the PAL was advised by Amy Martin, Director of the IHPA that she was freezing all of the PAL's accounts, that she would not sign a new contract with the University of Illinois Springfield (which employs all but one of the PAL's staff), and that she was asking the Office of the Executive Inspector General to conduct an investigation of the PAL and its entire staff.

The IHPA stated two reasons for its actions. First, it has raised an objection to the existence, without the direct authority of the IHPA, of two gift accounts that support the PAL. The IHPA asserts, without justification, that these gift accounts were improperly established, despite the IHPA's knowledge and awareness of these gift accounts since their creation, in the case of the Abraham Lincoln Association in 1985 and in the case of the University of Illinois Foundation since 2007. Four previous directors of the IHPA, prior to the current Director (who herself raised no prior objection to these accounts since assuming her role in 2012) have never raised a single objection to the existence or propriety of these accounts. Second, the IHPA charges that expenditures from these gift accounts were made by the PAL without the authorization of the IHPA Director. This allegation, absent of any charge or cited instance of any impropriety on the part of anyone associated with the PAL, is equally without merit.

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Incredibly, the IHPA seems to now be denying the fact that the Abraham Lincoln Association and the University of Illinois Springfield are co-sponsors of the PAL despite the fact that the University of Illinois and the Abraham Lincoln Association have been identified as co-sponsors of the PAL in news releases published by the IHPA, in newsletters and other publications under IHPA copyright and in grant applications and reports filed on behalf of the PAL and under the authority of the IHPA (including federal grant proposals filed on behalf of the PAL by the IHPA). This productive relationship has continued through the administrations of six Illinois governors and five directors, including the current Director, of the IHPA.

The IHPA further alleges that charges and expenditures have been incurred by the PAL from the Abraham Lincoln Association and the University of Illinois Foundation gift accounts without the prior authorization of the IHPA Director. Since neither of these two gift accounts are IHPA accounts, the allegation is *technically* correct. However, every PAL expenditure from these gift accounts has been and continues to be subject to stringent controls and review by parties independent of the PAL. Neither the Director of the PAL nor any PAL staff has ever signed a check written on either gift account. Expenditures from the Abraham Lincoln Association's gift account are independently reviewed by the Abraham Lincoln Association and checks are signed by a member of the Association's Executive Committee. If the expenditure is in an amount greater than \$1,000, the check requires two Executive Committee signatures. Expenditures from the University of Illinois Springfield's gift account go through a review process and are subject to all University procurement guidelines, as established by it. Further, all grant proposals written by the PAL (including those submitted through the IHPA) unambiguously note all streams of funding for the PAL and carefully match potential grant funds with cost sharing funds from state and private sources, including the gift accounts in question. There has never been and is not now any intention to hide any PAL expenditure. Despite these independent policies and controls and without any recital of a single act or alleged act of impropriety by any member of the PAL, the Director of the IHPA now intends to incur the considerable expense of an investigation of the PAL by the Executive Inspector General's Office.

The PAL is an important and worthwhile endeavor of the State of Illinois, "The Land of Lincoln." It has received extensive praise for its mission and the conduct of its affairs. Commenting on the PAL's recent announcement of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin and U.S. Representative Rodney Davis (R-Taylorville) noted the important role the PAL plays in "helping people learn more about the magic of Lincoln's legacy." At his presentation at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in May 2015, David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States, praised the PAL, commenting "I think that the Papers project has been the most aggressive, the most positive attempt to be comprehensive of the papers projects, and there are lots of papers projects going on.... And the discoveries that

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are made every day are just absolutely phenomenal...” a federal grant proposal review (2015) notes “The Papers of Abraham Lincoln has already made large contributions to scholarship related to Abraham Lincoln and his era... Given continued interest in Lincoln’s presidency and his legacy, the scholarly importance of this work is clear... The Lincoln Papers boasts a large and well-qualified staff... the staffs’ collective curriculum vita is impressive...”

The responsibility to continue to fund research about the life and times of Abraham Lincoln starts in Springfield and with the state of Illinois. Without their unflagging support of its greatest citizen, the PAL is doomed and the task of continuing to educate and enlighten people about the legacy of Illinois’ favorite son and America’s most influential president will be irreparably harmed. The responsibility to see that this doesn’t happen rests squarely with today’s local, state and federal leaders and decision makers. The exploration and continued discovery of Lincoln’s legacy cannot be allowed to die on the basis of unsubstantiated and unfounded charges and innuendos.

On behalf of the Advisory Board of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln and most importantly on behalf of the important work that the PAL is doing to foster, promote and cement Lincoln’s legacy, we urge you to get involved and right this wrong before the unwarranted actions taken by the IHPA cause irreparable damage to the PAL and its work.

Please let me know if there is anything that the Advisory Board can do to assist you to save The Papers of Abraham Lincoln.

Thank you.



Robert Lenz, Esq
Advisory Board Member, Papers of Abraham Lincoln
And On Behalf of the Advisory Board of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln
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