



Rauner starts 100 day countdown to Bicentennial Celebration

by Steven Spencer, Staff Writer
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KASKASKIA - Gov. Bruce Rauner today announced the start of the 100 Day Countdown to the Illinois Bicentennial Celebration from Kaskaskia Island, the first State Capitol of Illinois. The historic setting of the announcement is the site of the

“Liberty Bell of the West” and was attended by Lt. Gov. Evelyn Sanguinetti, local and regional officials, Bicentennial Commissioners and the public.



Kaskaskia briefly served as the state’s first capitol in 1818 when Illinois became the nation’s 21st state. After the flood of 1881 the Mississippi River shifted eastward making Kaskaskia the only Illinois territory west of the Mississippi.

“The Illinois Constitution was signed right here on Kaskaskia Island 199 years ago today,” Gov. Rauner said. “It is fitting that we begin our countdown to the Bicentennial Celebration where it all began.”

Illinois high school and college students across the state have been submitting self-made videos on “Something to Learn about Illinois History.” The 100 best videos are being chosen by a panel of judges and historians and will be posted on Illinois 200 social media platforms, by media partners WGNRadio.com, SJ-R.com and on other outlets. The deadline for submitting videos will be extended through September to allow school systems that start late to inform their students about the contest.

The first Bicentennial video was submitted by Melissa Crosby of Chester High School and posted today.

Each student whose video is chosen will receive two tickets to the performance of Hamilton in Chicago on Dec. 3, 2017 - the official start of the Illinois Bicentennial Celebration.

To enter the video contest or to get more information, visit www.illinois200.com.

Bicentennial Commission Co-Chair Randy Dunn, president of the Southern Illinois University System, emceed remarks that included the Lt. Gov. Evelyn Sanguinetti and Randolph County Board Chairman Ronald White.

“We are so thrilled that the governor and lieutenant governor chose to come to Randolph County to highlight our place in Illinois history,” White said. “We hope Illinoisans from all over the state will visit our historic sites throughout the Bicentennial Celebration.”

With the first County Courthouse in the background the governor and lieutenant governor joined a group of state, county and local leaders for a ceremonial signing of the 1818 Illinois Constitution.

After the Kaskaskia ceremonies, Lt. Gov. Sanguinetti led the group up the Kaskaskia /Cahokia Trail to the Pierre Menard House, the residence of Illinois’ first lieutenant governor. Local historians noted that Lt. Gov. Sanguinetti is the first sitting lieutenant governor to visit the Menard House in modern history.

“It is an honor for me to visit the Pierre Menard House on Constitution Day and celebrate the great history of Illinois,” the lieutenant governor said. “I look forward to celebrating our 200th birthday all across this great state.”

Illinois was recognized as a state on Dec. 3, 1818, and the official Illinois Bicentennial will be celebrated in 2018 with events planned across the state on Constitution Day, Aug. 26, 2018, and the grand birthday celebration at the United Center on Dec. 3, 2018. Municipalities and organizations that are planning Bicentennial activities between Dec. 3, 2017, and Dec. 3, 2018, can apply for endorsement by the Illinois Bicentennial. Visit the Participate page at www.illinois200.com for more information and to submit an application for endorsement.