



## NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 330  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
Phone: (402) 474-2131 Fax: (402) 474-4852  
E-mail: [nhc@nebraskahumanities.org](mailto:nhc@nebraskahumanities.org)  
Website: [www.nebraskahumanities.org](http://www.nebraskahumanities.org)

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# **N E W S   R E L E A S E**

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Contact: Erika Hamilton, (402) 474-2131, ext. 104

## **U.S. lawmakers to participate in Capitol Forum**

LINCOLN—Several members of Nebraska's congressional delegation are planning to participate in the ninth annual Nebraska Capitol Forum on America's Future on March 26 at the State Capitol.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel and U.S. Reps. Lee Terry and Adrian Smith will participate via video conferencing from Washington, D.C. U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry may also join the video conference.

More than 90 high school students and 25 teachers will gather at the daylong forum to discuss the U.S. role in today's world. The forum is a collaboration of the Nebraska Humanities Council and Secretary of State John Gale. The students and teachers will represent 23 high schools in Lincoln, Omaha, Bellevue, Albion, Ashland, Cambridge, Chadron, Crofton, Curtis, Holdrege, Howells, Lynch, North Platte, Springfield, Stanton, Sterling, Sumner, Superior, Utica, Valentine, and Wilcox.

Capitol Forum is a civic education initiative designed to give high school students a voice in public policy. For six months, students have studied and deliberated foreign policy issues in the classroom. On March 26, student representatives from each school will engage in discussion among themselves and with policymakers and other elected officials on such issues as immigration, nuclear weapon proliferation, terrorism, international trade, and the global environment. They will deliberate on four distinct options for the future of U.S. foreign policy, culminating in a conversation with members of Nebraska's congressional delegation.

The day begins at 8:30 a.m. with a welcome by Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy in the Warner Chamber. Deliberation on the four futures begins at 1:40 p.m. The students' conversation with Sen. Hagel, Reps. Terry and Smith, and possibly Rep. Fortenberry is scheduled for 2:45 p.m.

After the March 26 forum, teachers and students will return home to share their experiences with classmates, broadening the impact of Capitol Forum to hundreds of students statewide. These classes will complete a ballot describing their view of America's future role in the world. Results of the ballot will be compiled and distributed to elected officials, Nebraska schools and news media.

Capitol Forum is a Choices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century project, an outreach educational program of Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies.

In Nebraska, Capitol Forum is funded in part by the "We the People" initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Anne Stuart Batchelder, Merrill Lynch, Duncan Family Trust, Mrs. J. Allan Mactier, Nebraska Council of School Administrators, A to Z Printing, and Cooper Foundation.

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*Editors: For an interview with Secretary of State John Gale, call (402) 471-1572. News media are welcome to attend all sessions of Capitol Forum. For details on the day's agenda, call Erika Hamilton, NHC program officer, at (402) 474-2131, ext. 104.*