



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

The Advocates for Human Rights to Discuss Civil Rights and Voter Disenfranchisement at World Premiere of *Appomattox* at the Guthrie Theater

Minneapolis, MN (September 19, 2012): The Advocates for Human Rights will join the Guthrie Theater on October 2, 2012 for a performance of *Appomattox*, a new play about freedom, human rights, and race. Robin Phillips, executive director of The Advocates, will moderate an expert panel after the performance addressing current issues of civil rights and the Voter ID ballot initiative in Minnesota.

The two-act play begins in April 1865, with Ulysses S. Grant meeting Robert E. Lee to sign the treaty to end the bloodiest war in U.S. history. The days preceding the signing are depicted through the eyes of President Abraham Lincoln, his wife Mary, Julia Grant, Mary Custis Lee, and others. The second act opens in February 1965, when St. James Baptist Church deacon Jimmie Lee Jackson is shot by an Alabama state trooper during a peaceful protest for civil rights. The play then follows President Lyndon Johnson and his push to pass the Voting Rights Act through Congress.

“The arts are a natural place to discuss human rights issues,” says Phillips. “*Appomattox* addresses civil and human rights issues that have shaped the United States throughout its history, including the right to vote. Today in Minnesota, the right of citizens to vote is once again threatened. The proposed Voter ID amendment on the ballot in Minnesota would, for the first time in the state’s history, narrow suffrage. Voting is a human right, not a privilege. The Advocates for Human Rights opposes the amendment.”

The proposed Voter ID amendment would narrow suffrage because many thousands of Minnesotans, who are currently eligible to vote, do not have a government-issued photo ID. According to the Minnesota League of Women Voters, those least likely to have a government-issued photo ID include:

- 18 percent of elderly citizens do not have a government-issued photo ID.
- 15 percent of voters earning less than \$35,000 a year do not have a photo ID.
- 18 percent of citizens aged 18-24 do not have a government-issued ID with their current address and name.
- 10 percent of voters with disabilities do not have a photo ID.
- 25 percent of African-American citizens of voting age do not have a current, government-issued ID.

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The Advocates for Human Rights, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Minneapolis, is dedicated to the promotion of internationally-recognized human rights. To learn more visit theadvocatesforhumanrights.org.