

Legislation Honors 2009 Bicentennial of Lincoln's Birth with Penny Redesign; Creates \$1 Coin Series

To: National Circuit

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May 18 – United States Senators John Sununu (R-NH) and Harry Reid (D-NV) introduced bipartisan legislation on May 17 reaffirming Congressional interest in making historic changes to the 1-cent coin ("Lincoln penny").

In February, five senators from Illinois, Indiana, and Kentucky introduced the "Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial 1-Cent Coin Redesign Act" (S. 341) to implement recommendations of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission ("Commission") to honor President Lincoln on the 200th anniversary of his birth and the 100th anniversary of the production of the Lincoln penny. The new legislation by Sununu and Reid (S. 1047), which includes 17 original cosponsors, combines the Lincoln penny redesign bill with a bill to create a presidential \$1 coin series.

The bill directs the United States Mint to produce a series of 1-cent coins with designs on the reverse that are emblematic of the four major periods of President Lincoln's life – Lincoln's birth and childhood in Kentucky; his formative years in Indiana; his professional life in Illinois; and Lincoln's presidency in Washington, D.C.

Mark W. Weller, the Executive Director of Americans for Common Cents, said, "We support the 2009 bicentennial penny legislation and look forward to working with Congress and staff to advance the Commission's mandate." Congress created the Commission in 2000 to pay tribute to the significant and lasting contributions President Lincoln made to the United States. According to Michael F. Bishop, the Executive Director of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, "A Lincoln penny series would dramatically highlight the important stages of Lincoln's life, and would appeal to Americans as they go about daily transactions."

Weller said he believes Congress will be eager to pass this legislation. "Independent research shows that an overwhelming majority of Americans – approximately three-fourths – favor keeping the penny a part of America's currency system." Weller added, "Abraham Lincoln's image has graced the coin since 1909; his cultural significance to our nation is noteworthy. It's not just that the front of the penny has had Lincoln's image since 1909, it's what Lincoln did for our nation. Lincoln is what we like to think of as president." The House of Representatives approved (422-6) the "Presidential \$1 Coin Act" (H.R. 902) on April 27.

Combining the penny and dollar coin bills increases the prospects for Congressional consideration and passage. Both initiatives are modeled after the successes of the 50 States Commemorative Coin Program for circulating quarters, as well as the new 2005 Jefferson, American Bison 5-cent coin.

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Americans for Common Cents (<http://www.pennies.org>) is a broad-based advocacy group of business, charitable, and numismatic organizations. The group formed in 1990 in response to Congressional threats to eliminate the 1-cent coin. Information about the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission can be found at (<http://www.lincolnbicentennial.gov>).