Center on Congress Celebrates 10th Anniversary
With Events on IU Bloomington Campus Oct. 8-9

BLOOMINGTON, Ind., Sept. 25 — The Center on Congress at Indiana University will celebrate its 10th anniversary in a series of events in Bloomington Oct. 8 and 9.

“The two days of activities are being planned in partnership with the numerous departments, faculty and staff at IU Bloomington who have worked with us over the past decade to improve the public’s understanding of Congress and strengthen civic engagement,” said Center Director Lee Hamilton.

Hamilton, who served in the U.S. House of Representatives from Indiana from 1965 to 1999, founded the Center when he left Congress because he felt there was a need for a nonpartisan institution to educate young people and adults about the crucial role of the legislative branch in government, and to equip them with the knowledge and skills to be active and effective in revitalizing American democracy.

In its first decade, the Center has developed an extensive array of resources and programs that reach out to a wide variety of Americans — students at the elementary, middle and high school levels; teachers in the social studies; college and university scholars of Congress and American politics; journalists; people seeking to become U.S. citizens; and concerned citizens of Indiana and the nation.

The anniversary celebration also marks the official debut of Hamilton’s new book, “Strengthening Congress,” published by IU Press. In it, Hamilton details the steps Congress should take to re-establish the power and influence envisioned for it in the Constitution and work more effectively with the executive branch. He calls on Americans to take more seriously their responsibilities as citizens and engage with the critical issues facing their communities and the nation.

A reviewer for the Washington Post wrote, “The book provides useful context and history for understanding how Congress has gone flabby…” and said of the author, “Few former legislators have a legacy of such distinction and probity as Hamilton and such a depth of knowledge on his subject."
Two of the Center’s 10th anniversary events focus on “Strengthening Congress,” and are open to all — members of the Indiana University community as well as other residents of Bloomington.

The first public program is on Thursday, Oct. 8, at 4pm, when Hamilton is the featured speaker at the Robert G. Gunderson Forum in Rhetoric and Public Culture. The Forum is organized by the IU Department of Communication and Culture in honor of one of its longtime faculty members.

Hosting the Forum is John Louis Lucaites, Professor of Rhetoric and Public Culture and editor of the Quarterly Journal of Speech. The Forum will be held in the Moot Court Room of IU’s Mauer School of Law, at 211 S. Indiana Ave., on the west side of campus. Garage parking is available one block south.

On Friday, Oct. 9, at 10:30am, the public is invited to hear a panel of experts on Congress, politics and the media analyze the themes explored in the book. Moderator of the discussion will be Edward G. Carmines, the Warner O. Chapman Professor and Rudy Professor of political science at IU Bloomington, and research director for the Center on Congress. Along with Hamilton, the panelists will be: John Bodnar, Chancellor’s Professor of history, co-director of the Center for the Study of History and Memory at IU Bloomington, and director of IU’s Institute of Advanced Study; Marjorie R. Hershey, IU Professor of political science; Sylvia A. Smith, veteran Washington editor of the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette; and Matthew Tully, formerly a reporter for Congressional Quarterly in Washington, now a political columnist for the Indianapolis Star. The program, also in the Moot Court Room of IU’s Mauer School of Law, runs until noon.

Hamilton has several other meetings scheduled with groups on campus during the Center’s two-day anniversary celebration. On Thursday he will lunch with undergraduate students in IU’s new PACE (Political and Civic Engagement) program. The interdisciplinary courses and activities of PACE aim to motivate students to become knowledgeable, effective, and committed citizens. Hosting the luncheon is PACE director Michael Grossberg, the Sally M. Reahard Professor of History and Professor of Law at IU.

On Thursday afternoon, Hamilton will speak and take students’ questions in two political science classes: the American Political Controversies class, taught by Eric French; and the Politics and the Media class, taught by Assistant Professor Yanna Krupnikov.

On Friday afternoon, Hamilton will be at the IU School of Education for a roundtable discussion in which faculty, graduate students, and Indiana high school social studies teachers advise the Center on Congress on how to stay at the cutting edge of developing educational resources that will interest today’s school children in Congress, representative democracy, and citizenship.

Hamilton and School of Education Dean Gerardo Gonzalez will make opening remarks, then facilitating the discussion will be Terrence C. Mason, Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and Director of the IU Center for Social Studies and international Education.
The anniversary celebration concludes Friday evening at a dinner for invited guests, co-hosted by Hamilton and IU President Michael A. McRobbie.

About the Center on Congress and its Director

The Center on Congress developed out of Hamilton's recognition during his 34 years in Congress that the public should be more familiar with the institution's strengths and weaknesses, its role in our system of government, and its impact on the lives of ordinary people every day.

The Center offers programs, projects and resources that foster an informed electorate which understands our system of government and participates in civic life. These include: print publications; Web-based, interactive modules and other online learning tools in English and Spanish; commentaries for newspapers and radio stations; video and television in the classroom resources; survey research; teacher awards; and seminars, conferences, and a lecture series.

During his time in Congress, Hamilton was a leading voice on foreign affairs and economic policy, and he worked to promote integrity and efficiency in the institution. He served as chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, of the Joint Economic Committee, and of the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress.

Hamilton continues to play an active role in matters of international relations and American national security. He was co-chairman of the Iraq Study Group, and Vice Chairman of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission).

Hamilton was born in 1931 in Daytona Beach, Fla. His family relocated to Tennessee and then Evansville, Ind. He graduated from DePauw University and the Indiana University School of Law, and he studied for a year at Goethe University in Germany. A former high school and college basketball star, he was inducted into the Indiana basketball Hall of Fame in 1982. Before his 1964 election to Congress, he practiced law in Chicago and Columbus, Ind.

In addition to directing the Center on Congress, Hamilton is President and Director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, in Washington, D.C., where scholars, policymakers and business leaders engage in a comprehensive and non-partisan dialogue on public policy issues.

For more information, go to www.centeroncongress.org.