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Former Presidents Carter and Ford to Oversee Bipartisan National Commission on Federal Election Reform

**Charlottesville — January 30, 2001** Former U.S. presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford have agreed to serve as active honorary bipartisan co-chairs of the newly established National Commission on Federal Election Reform. The Commission will be co-chaired by Howard Baker and Lloyd Cutler. Former U.S. Senator Howard Baker served both as Senate Majority Leader and as Chief of Media Releases to President Reagan. Washington attorney Lloyd Cutler served as the White House Counsel both to President Carter and, more recently, to President Clinton.

The Commission is being organized by the Miller Center of Public Affairs of the University of Virginia and The Century Foundation. The Commission will receive no public funds. Its work will be made possible by a group of foundations, led by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

The National Commission on Federal Election Reform will recommend ways to improve the process used for electing federal officials, namely the President, Vice President, and Members of Congress. Former presidents Carter and Ford stressed that the Commission will adopt a forward-looking perspective. Its initial focus will be on improving and standardizing the processes now being used to cast and count ballots for elected federal offices. "This is not a Commission to rewrite the Constitution or refight the contest in Florida," they said. "Instead, we hope to bring together thoughtful people from across the political spectrum to think about how our democratic institutions can improve the way our nation elects the leaders of our federal government, including the use of state-of-the-art technology."

Philip Zelikow, Director of the Miller Center and White Burkett Miller Professor of History at the University of Virginia, will be Executive Director of the Commission. He will work in cooperation with Richard C. Leone, President of The Century Foundation. The Commission will be the ninth in a series of national commissions organized by the Miller Center on issues confronting the presidency. The Century Foundation, formerly

known as the Twentieth Century Fund, has a long history of establishing highly regarded bipartisan task forces and commissions to examine and suggest reform in political processes and public policy.

Other members of the Commission will be named soon. The Commission will convene meetings and public hearings throughout the country. It will be supported by an interactive website that will provide citizens with the opportunity to stay informed about its work and offer their suggestions. The Commission plans to release its report in 2001, in time to help inform the ongoing legislative efforts of the 107th Congress. "We applaud the attention White House and Congressional leaders are giving to election reform," former presidents Carter and Ford said. "We plan to prepare a report and sponsor research that will be of real use to the Congress and the Administration as they move forward."The Commission will sponsor task forces to support its work on such subjects as the "best practices" being developed by state and local election officials, the evolution of the federal electoral process, and legal issues to be considered -- including the appropriate role of the federal government. One of these groups, on "best practices," has already begun its work, organized by Harvard University professor David King.

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