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Americans Bring Passion, Discord and Hope to the Polls in P.O.V.'s "Election Day," Tuesday, July 1 on PBS

A co-production of Independent Television Service (ITVS)

"'Election Day' is unique largely because it's not about politics so much as the act of voting and what voting means to people of various walks of life . . ." – Chris Vognar, *Dallas Morning News*

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

National Air

Date: **Tuesday, July 1, 2008** at 10 p.m. on PBS. (Check local listings.) The **P.O.V.** series (a cinema term for "point of view") is now in its 21st year on PBS, is broadcast **Tuesdays at 10 p.m.**, June through October, with primetime specials in the fall and winter.

Summary: Forget the pie charts, color-coded maps and hyperventilating pundits. What's the street-level experience of voters in today's America? In a triumph of documentary storytelling, **Election Day** combines 11 stories — shot simultaneously on November 2, 2004, from dawn until long past midnight — into one. Factory workers, ex-felons, harried moms, Native American activists and diligent poll watchers, from South Dakota to Florida, take the process of democracy into their own hands. The result: an entertaining, inspiring and sometimes unsettling tapestry of citizens determined on one fateful day to make their votes count. *A co-production of Independent Television Service (ITVS).*

Filmmaker's
Statement:

"In making **Election Day**, we set out to depict the real people who make our democracy work, but whose actions are not the stuff of the evening news," says director Chevigny. "Our jumping-off point was the 2000 election, which had brought the failures of our voting systems into sharp focus. We decided to look at how the shadow of that election would affect the attitudes and experiences of voters and poll workers across the country in 2004. We hope that viewers find the film to be a nuanced portrait of the attitudes and experiences of the citizens who make this democracy tick."

People and
Places:

Jim Fuchs, Chicago – Jim, a Republican poll-watcher and committeeman, rushes from one polling place to the next, railing against the notorious corruption in the Democratic "machine."

Brenda Holt, Quincy, Fla. – Brenda is one of many volunteers keeping a close eye on the vote in 2004. Gadsden County is the only majority-black county in Florida. Morris Young is running an underdog campaign for sheriff against Deputy Sheriff Ed Spooner.

Leon Batts, New York – Fifty-year-old Leon, a former prisoner with a felony conviction, votes for the first time in his life. In New York State, ex-felons can apply to have their voting rights reinstated once they have completed their parole.

Alzo Reddick, Orlando, Fla. – Former state legislator Alzo welcomes Kerry campaign volunteers to his restaurant in a swing section of the city. Back in the kitchen the dishwasher, “Bossman,” laments his ineligibility to vote due to his ex-felon status.

Shanta Martin, St. Louis, Mo. – An international elections observer from Australia, Shanta observes polls in St. Louis to see whether they meet international standards.

Dan “Buzz” Deters, Cincinnati, Ohio –The brother of a Republican candidate for county prosecutor, Buzz works to coordinate the Deters campaign team.

Paula Thompson, Shaker Heights, Ohio – A first-time volunteer, Paula works at a crowded polling place trying to facilitate the process for voters in the Cleveland suburbs.

Jason Drapeaux, Pine Ridge, S.D. – Jason leads a volunteer operation to get thousands of Native Americans to the polls. Tribal elections are held on the same day as the U.S. federal election.

Fisher family, Stockholm, Wis. – Organic farmers in a remote area near the Minnesota border. Daughter Franny, 18, registers and votes at the polling place in town (pop. 97).

Bio: Katy Chevigny, Director/Producer/Writer

Katy Chevigny is an award-winning filmmaker who runs the nonprofit media organization Arts Engine and its production arm, Big Mouth Films, in New York. Her credits include the acclaimed “Deadline,” an investigation into Illinois Governor George Ryan’s commuting of death sentences, which she co-directed with Kirsten Johnson. After premiering at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival, the film was broadcast on NBC, was nominated for an Emmy and won the Thurgood Marshall Journalism Award. She also directed the feature-length “Journey to the West: Chinese Medicine Today.”

Chevigny has produced five award-winning documentaries: “Arctic Son” (P.O.V., 2007), “Innocent Until Proven Guilty,” “Nuyorican Dream,” “Brother Born Again” and “Outside Looking In: Transracial Adoption in America.” She is currently in post-production on “The Dishes,” the story of a punk rock band that juggles family and careers in Chicago. Through her work at Arts Engine, Chevigny also oversees MediaRights.org and the Media That Matters Film Festival.

Festivals: World Premiere, Sundance Film Festival, Documentary Competition, January 2008
New Orleans Human Rights Film Festival, April 2008
New York Human Rights Watch Film Festival, June 2008

Length: 86:46

Festivals: South by Southwest Film Festival, Austin, Texas, 2007
Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival, Toronto, 2007
Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, New York, 2007
Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Films, 2007
Stranger Than Fiction Documentary Series at IFC Film Center, New York, 2007
St. Louis International Film Festival, 2007
Atlanta Film Festival, 2007
Maine International Film Festival, Waterville, Maine, 2007
South Dakota Film Festival, Aberdeen, S.D., 2007
Rhode Island International Film Festival, Providence, R.I., 2007
Camden Film Festival, Camden, Maine, 2007
Global Peace Film Festival, Orlando, Fla., 2007

Credits: Director: Katy Chevigny
Producers: Maggie Bowman, Dallas Brennan Rexer
Editor: Penelope Falk
Original Music: John Kimbrough

P.O.V. Web: The **Election Day** companion website, www.pbs.org/pov/electionday, offers a streaming video trailer of the film, an interview with filmmaker Katy Chevigny (video, podcast and text), a list of related websites, organizations and books, a downloadable discussion guide, and classroom activity, and the following special features:

- **Additional Video:** Follow the story of a disabled voter and find out more about what made Jim Fuchs, the Republic poll watcher in Chicago, angry on Election Day. Watch clips not shown in the broadcast version of the film;
- **Making Elections Better:** We ask a roundtable of election experts: What's the one thing you would tell people to do to make the American election system better? They weigh in with what you can do to improve things at the polls;
- **Election FAQ:** Why are voting laws so different from state to state? What's a poll watcher, and how can you become one? We answer frequently asked questions about the election system. If you have a related question, ask it in the comments. An expert will answer select viewer questions on the *P.O.V. Blog* during the week after **Election Day** is broadcast on P.O.V.

Outreach: P.O.V. is working with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in **Election Day**. For a list of upcoming screening and discussion events, go to: http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_news.php

P.O.V. also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop a facilitation guide with discussion questions and background information to help event organizers carry out discussions around the film's content. Cari Ladd has created the lesson plan. The American Library Association and P.O.V. have created a multimedia resource list of related fiction and nonfiction books and videos that further explore the issues. The materials are available free of charge at: www.amdoc.org/outreach.

Pressroom: Visit P.O.V.'s pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

P.O.V.: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 21st season on PBS in 2008, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought more than 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide, and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V. is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Educational Foundation of America, The Fledgling Fund, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The September 11th Fund, and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston and Thirteen/WNET New York.

DVD REQUESTS: Please note that a broadcast version of this film is available upon request, as the film may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.

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