

Representative Dennis M. O'Brien
Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 8, 2008

**O'Brien Announces *Angela's Ashes* Author Frank McCourt to Deliver
2008 Speaker's Millennium Lecture**

Free Public Lecture Scheduled for November 10 in the Capitol's House Chamber

HARRISBURG — Speaker of the House of Representatives Dennis M. O'Brien (R-Philadelphia) announced today that writer, teacher and Pulitzer Prize-winner Frank McCourt will deliver the annual Speaker's Millennium Lecture at the State Capitol on the evening of November 10.

McCourt's lecture is presented by the Speaker's Office in partnership with the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. Admission is free but tickets are required.

"I am thrilled that Mr. McCourt accepted our invitation to speak on *Ireland to America: an Immigrant's Journey*," said Speaker O'Brien. "He has a powerful story to tell, which will resonate here in Pennsylvania, home to immigrants from Ireland and many other nations since before our nation was founded."

"I join the Speaker in expressing our great enthusiasm for bringing Frank McCourt to the State Capitol," said Ralph Pearson, chairman of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council. "The Speaker's Office and PHC believe that reading and discussion are an excellent way to engage people in the humanities. Through PHC's book discussion program, we have found that our audiences are fascinated by people's life stories and what they tell us about our selves and our culture. This event is a wonderful opportunity for the public to reflect on its own experiences through a discussion of Frank McCourt's personal story."

Frank McCourt was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., to Irish immigrant parents. He grew up in Limerick, Ireland, and returned to America in 1949.

McCourt gained international recognition for his memoir *Angela's Ashes*, which was awarded both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Next, he wrote *'Tis* about his life as an immigrant in the U.S. His most recent memoir was *Teacher Man*, which describes his teaching career in the Brooklyn Public School system, which spanned 30 years.

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“Mccourt’s writing reflects a deep sensitivity for the struggles of poverty and his impassioned concern for education. He is remarkable both as a writer and as a public figure for his ability to transform a personal history of hardship into a narrative of generosity and humor,” O’Brien said.

On November 10, an audience of about 600 will assemble in the Hall of the House of Representatives to reflect on how McCourt’s growth as an individual and as a writer were influenced by his experiences with childhood poverty and immigration.

Mccourt also will touch on how he found his voice as a writer and what continues to motivate him to write. The program will reach homes statewide via telecast on the Pennsylvania Cable Network.

Since 2000, the Speaker’s Office of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives has partnered with the Pennsylvania Humanities Council to host this program. The award-winning McCourt joins the ranks of former Millennium speakers — John Updike, Anna Quindlen, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Studs Terkel, James McPherson and David McCullough — in creating a dialogue among Pennsylvanians about the ideas and history that have shaped our country.

Seating for this event is limited and is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Those who wish to obtain tickets must e-mail a request, including name and address for tickets to be sent, to (jschmedlen@speakerobrien.com) or fax their request to Jeanne Schmedlen in the Speaker’s Office at 717-787-5201. Only two tickets per person may be ordered. Tickets will be sent beginning in August.

The Pennsylvania Speakership is the oldest elected position in the nation. The first Speaker took his oath in ceremonies in 1682 in Philadelphia. On January 2, 2007, Dennis M. O’Brien became the 135th person to be elected Speaker of the House.

The Pennsylvania Humanities Council, a nonprofit organization, inspires individuals to enjoy and share a life of learning. PHC offers grants which support humanities programs centered in the arts, history, literature and other humanities fields. PHC’s statewide speakers bureau and packaged book discussion program also serve as resources for residents of Pennsylvania.

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