

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Joe Courtney today sent the following letter to director Steve Spielberg and DreamWorks, asking Spielberg to correct an historical inaccuracy in the Academy Award-nominated film, *Lincoln*, which places Connecticut on the wrong side of the slavery debate and ratification of the 13th

Amendment. In the film’s climactic scene, two of Connecticut’s three Members of Congress vote against the 13th

Amendment outlawing slavery. In fact, according to the *Congressional Record* from January 31, 1865, all four of Connecticut’s House Members—men from New London, Colchester, New Haven and Salisbury—voted in favor of the Amendment and against slavery.

Courtney’s letter to Mr. Spielberg is below, in full. A PDF version can also be downloaded at [this link](#)

. And a PDF copy of the *Congressional Globe* documenting floor proceedings of the 38th

Congress’s vote on the 13th

Amendment is available [here](#)

.

Dear Mr. Spielberg,

After finally sitting down to watch your Academy Award-nominated film, *Lincoln*, I can say unequivocally that the rave reviews are justified: Daniel Day-Lewis is tremendous, the story is compelling and consuming, and the cinematography is beautiful.

The historical accuracy of the film’s moving conclusion, however? Well, that is a different story.

As a Member of Congress from Connecticut, I was on the edge of my seat during the roll call

vote on the ratification of the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery. But when two of three members of the Nutmeg State's House delegation voted to

hold

up

slavery, I could not believe my own eyes and ears. How could Congressmen from Connecticut—a state that supported President Lincoln and lost thousands of her sons fighting against slavery on the Union side of the Civil War—have been on the wrong side of history?

After some digging and a check of the Congressional Record from January 31, 1865, I learned that in fact, Connecticut's entire Congressional delegation, including *four* members of the House of Representatives—Augustus Brandegee of New London, James English of New Haven, Henry Deming of Colchester and John Henry Hubbard of Salisbury—all voted to abolish slavery. Even in a delegation that included both Democrats and Republicans, Connecticut provided a unified front against slavery.

In many movies, including your own *E.T.* and *Gremlins*, for example, suspending disbelief is part of the cinematic experience and is critical to enjoying the film. But in a movie based on significant real-life events—particularly a movie about a seminal moment in American history so closely associated with Doris Kearns Goodwin and her book,

Team of Rivals

—accuracy is paramount.

I understand that artistic license will be taken and that some facts may be blurred to make a story more compelling on the big screen, but placing the State of Connecticut on the wrong side of the historic and divisive fight over slavery is a distortion of easily verifiable facts and an inaccuracy that should be acknowledged, and if possible, corrected before *Lincoln* is released on DVD.

Sincerely,

Rep. Joe Courtney

###