



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 20, 2010

Contact: Ed Maddox 213-361-6980
James Bolden 213-200-5314

BOARD OBSERVES 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT BY HONORING NATHANIEL AYERS WHOSE MOVING STORY WAS THE BASIS OF THE FILM 'THE SOLOIST'

LOS ANGELES – Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and the Board today observed the 20-year anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), highlighting the accomplishments of Nathaniel Anthony Ayers, whose moving life story was chronicled by L.A. Times columnist Steve Lopez, and was the basis of the DreamWorks feature film *The Soloist*.

The ADA was signed into law on July 26, 1990 as a measure to provide equal protection from discrimination and access to resources to citizens with legally-defined disabilities. The ADA defines a "disability" as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity."

In the coming weeks, President Barack Obama will be acknowledging the 20th anniversary of the ADA with a celebration at the White House. As a guest of the President, Mr. Ayers will travel with his sister to Washington, D.C. to attend the celebration.

"It is important for us as a community to recognize that there should be no shame or fear in seeking treatment for mental illness. We must offer support and resources to those around us who require assistance to maximize their potential," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said.

"Mr. Ayers is an extremely talented musician, and is living proof of the ways in which all citizens can benefit from the protections and provisions that the ADA offers."

In 2008, the ADA was amended to establish additional protections for disabled workers, and to revise restrictive elements of the ADA in its original form.

Thanking the Supervisor for the recognition, Mr. Ayers said he was glad to represent Los Angeles County at the White House, acknowledging several supporters in the audience, including L.A. Times columnist Steve Lopez.

He proceeded to entertain the audience by playing a piece on his violin by his favorite classical composer, Ludwig van Beethoven.

“We often focus on the physical disabilities that the ADA responds to, but today we choose to also acknowledge and bring awareness to the ‘invisible’ disabilities that mental illness may cause,” the Supervisor said.

“We salute you today, Mr. Ayers. Thank you for representing Los Angeles County at such a noteworthy celebration.”

#