



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Aurelio Rojas 213-280-6579

James Bolden 213-200-5314

**SUPERVISOR RIDLEY-THOMAS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS TO
HOST 18TH ANNUAL EMPOWERMENT CONGRESS SUMMIT AND
KEYNOTE SPEAKER MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN, FOUNDER OF THE
CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND**

LOS ANGELES -- Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas on Saturday will host the 18th annual summit of the Empowerment Congress, a pioneering constituent-based partnership of neighborhood groups, business and religious institutions that he founded to increase community participation and make government more inclusive and responsive.

This year's event will be **held Saturday, January 23 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.** in the Loker Student Union at California State University, Dominguez Hills, located at 1000 E. Victoria Street in Carson. The keynote address will be delivered by Marian Wright Edelman, the nationally acclaimed founder of the Children's Defense Fund, who will discuss the organization's partnership to open innovative "Freedom Schools" in the Second District.

The Empowerment Congress, which Ridley-Thomas founded when he was a member of the Los Angeles City Council, is widely viewed as the precursor to the City of Los Angeles' Neighborhood Councils. Last year, a record 1,200 residents and elected officials attended the Empowerment Congress summit.

This year's theme is "We are the Second District: Educated, Engaged and Empowered for Action." Workshops will include panel discussions on the building of a new Martin Luther King, Jr., Hospital and participation opportunities as well as economic development opportunities along the Crenshaw Boulevard to Los Angeles International Airport light rail system. Together, the two projects will generate more than \$2 billion in public investments and over 16,000 jobs.

Another workshop will focus on Freedom Schools. Supervisor Ridley-Thomas plans to open five of the schools this year in conjunction with the Children's Defense Fund. The organization operates more than 100 of the schools nationwide. The six-week summer program is designed

to foster a love of reading, self-esteem and encourage parental involvement in civic engagement and social action.

In addition to the informative speakers, more than two dozen County departments will staff booths offering a variety of information and resources -- and the Public Health Department will administer free H1N1 flu vaccinations on site.

Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, who in December completed his inaugural year as the first new member of the Board of Supervisors in 15 years, will deliver his "State of the Second District" address. The summit will also provide residents with an opportunity to provide their input and make connections at a free networking luncheon.

"I made a promise during the campaign to bring the work of the Empowerment Congress with its commitment to education, engagement, and empowerment to the cities and communities that make up the Second Supervisorial District," Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said. "Each year, we come together to listen, to learn, to share and to lead a new constitutional-based movement for change."

The Second Supervisorial District includes the cities of Carson, Compton, Culver City, Gardena, Hawthorne, Inglewood, Lawndale and Lynwood. With 2.3 million residents, the district also includes, but are not limited to portions of the unincorporated communities of Alondra Park, Athens, Del Aire, Dominguez, East Compton, El Camino Village, Florence, Ladera Heights, Lennox, View Park, West Athens, West Carson, West Compton, Willowbrook and Wisburn.

Parking is free. For more information, please call 213 743-7200, or log onto www.empowermentcongress.org