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RIDLEY-THOMAS TO HOST 19TH ANNUAL EMPOWERMENT CONGRESS SUMMIT FEATURING ATTORNEY GENERAL KAMALA HARRIS

Los Angeles—Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas and the Empowerment Congress will host the 19th annual Empowerment Congress Summit on Saturday, January 15th at the University of Southern California. Supervisor Ridley-Thomas will present his State of the Second District address, highlighting the milestones achieved in his second year in office and key policy priorities for the year ahead. Attorney General Kamala Harris, in one of her first major appearances since taking office, will deliver keynote remarks. Hundreds of community residents and activists will then participate in workshops on the Second District's policy priorities. The theme of this year's summit, which will take place on the weekend commemorating the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is "We Are the Second District: Empowered to Realize the Dream."

"As we celebrate the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Second District once again comes together to discuss our shared vision for genuine community empowerment and to engage residents in crafting our public policy agenda," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. "I am delighted to welcome newly elected Attorney General Kamala Harris back to the Second District to discuss her smart-on-crime

vision for California's justice system. She will be a key ally in our efforts to create a more restorative model of justice here in Los Angeles County."

Founded in 1992 by then Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, the Empowerment Congress is a dynamic coalition of neighborhood groups, residents, nonprofit organizations, businesses, religious institutions, and community leaders. The Empowerment Congress served as a model and precursor to the City of Los Angeles' Neighborhood Councils and now serves over 2.5 million residents in the Los Angeles County Second Supervisorial District, from Koreatown south to Carson, Playa del Rey to Compton. The Empowerment Congress's annual summit is an ongoing effort to strengthen our participatory government, founded on the principle that elected officials are most effective when the constituents they serve are actively involved in the decision-making process. More information can be found at: <http://www.empowermentcongress.org/>

After Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' State of the District Address and the keynote speech by Attorney General Harris, summit participants will attend the following workshops:

Citizen Participation in Policy Reforms at the Department of Children and Family Services

Troubles in the child welfare system have become a constant headline in Los Angeles. While much of the focus has been on fatalities of children in DCFS custody, Second District residents face many other concerns such as protecting parental rights in dependency disputes and ensuring that the department has proper information and technology to make informed decisions. In this session, participants will discuss policy issues that negatively impact children in the care of the Department of Children and Family Services and their families. Through an interactive dialogue session, participants will be empowered to design solutions to these issues.

Out of the Shadows: Strategies to Identify and Treat Mental Illness

In a County where one out of eight adults has been diagnosed with depression and 10% are known to live with frequent mental distress, few families go untouched by the challenges related to mental health. Given the increased stress associated with the economic downturn as well as the sharp rise in first-time homelessness, education around mental health issues is more necessary now than ever. This panel will inform and empower participants to recognize mental health indicators and discuss ways that families, friends, faith-based entities, co-workers and others can offer support.

Beyond Incarceration: Envisioning a New Probation Department

Los Angeles County runs the largest probation department in the world, with over 2,000 youths housed in 18 probation camps and two juvenile halls at any given point in time. With a cost per probationer of more than \$7500 a month, an average camp stay of four and half months, and a recidivism rate between 50-75%, the existing system is both costly and ineffective. Worse, ongoing discoveries of corruption, disorganization and abuse demonstrate that at times the department actively hinders the successful reintegration of many youth back into the community. Led by Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, many organizations have called for a consent decree to require Federal oversight over probation camp reform. In addition, the progressive alternative models that are being implemented around the nation provide resources and examples of what the Los Angeles County Probation Department should aspire to emulate. This panel will explore these alternative models and discuss how Los Angeles County can best move forward with reform.

Town Centers: Economic Development Strategies for Traditional Neighborhoods

This panel will explore strategies for strengthening local economies through a more sustainable transportation infrastructure, local job creation and retention, and community asset building. Participants will learn about economic and community development projects specifically designed to create vibrant neighborhood identities in Los Angeles County's unincorporated areas.

Social Justice through the Arts

In this panel presentation, participants will dig into the historical, cultural, architectural and sociological significance of the Watts Towers, learn about the creative partnerships that have been forged to preserve this important work and identify opportunities to advance a social justice agenda through art. The panel will also explore other local examples of how social justice is being promoted through the arts.

Emergency Preparedness: Is Los Angeles Ready for the Big One?

In an era of domestic terrorist attacks, hurricanes and mammoth oil spills, Americans have learned that both natural and manmade disasters are inevitable occurrences. Yet in each of these disasters, the role and action of both local and federal government has undergone significant scrutiny. In this session, panelists will discuss how prepared Los Angeles County is to handle a local emergency and learn how to prepare themselves and their families.

Urban Ecology and Green Technology – How They Apply To Your Community

Communities throughout the Second District are faced with serious environmental concerns: active oilfields, land that is currently being investigated for groundwater contamination, air quality concerns, and a lack of open space. This panel will engage community members in a conversation about how they can access the necessary tools and knowledge to take leadership roles in gathering environmental data and then use that data to improve their ecosystem and the social health of their communities.

Redrawing the Map: Citizen Participation in LA County's Redistricting Process

As the Board of Supervisors and local cities gear up for redistricting, the public must understand the impact the reallocation of federal representation and funding may have on them, and how they can engage in the process. This panel will provide an overview of the redistricting process and discuss the opportunities and importance of local participation.

Youth Voices: Creating Opportunities for Youth Empowerment in the Second District

There are few safe and welcoming spaces that provide a venue for frank and honest dialogue about the issues of importance to youth. This session will allow for a dialogue among youths to discuss important issues related to education, health, safety and justice. Participants will have an opportunity to put pen to paper and visually depict their ideas and opinions on a board, followed by a chance to tour the “gallery” space and share their renderings. (For youths age 15-21)

The Power of Multi-Organizational Networks

As nonprofits are forced to thrive in an environment in which resources are scarce, the power of working in multi-organizational networks provides great opportunities for coordination and systems change. With the right structures and planning in place, networks of diverse organizations can successfully work together as equal partners to pursue a common social or civic purpose over a sustained period of time.

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