COUNCILMEMBER HARRIS-DAWSON LEADS LA-BASED COALITION TO ANNOUNCE 1965 VOTING RIGHTS ACT 50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

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LOS ANGELES – On Thursday, July 28, Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson introduced a resolution to the Los Angeles City Council to commemorate the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA) in light of its 50th Anniversary.

The resolution recognizes and affirms the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. With this resolution, the Council expresses its full commitment to ensure that all Angelenos are able to exercise their right to vote and that the council encourages and supports a robust and unprecedented voter registration and mobilization effort.

To announce the resolution, Councilmember Harris-Dawson was joined by Councilmember David Ryu, the first Korean-American on City Council, and a multi-cultural coalition at a press conference to announce the Los Angeles commemoration of the 50th Anniversary. A multi-day slate of programs will kick off on Saturday, August 1.

The “VRA 50th Anniversary Week” in August will come on the heels of a summer with both new and past painful memories tied to voting rights and racial equality - from the June 1963 Mississippi murders of voter registration volunteers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, as well as activist Medgar Evers - to the recent Charleston massacre of Emanuel AME pastor, Democratic State Senator Clementa Pinckney and eight congregants.

“The City of Los Angeles is squarely on the side of the forces of inclusion, opportunity and social and economic justice for all,” said Marqueece Harris-Dawson. “By introducing this resolution today, we are ensuring that the Voting Rights Act is not undermined.”

Democratic congressional members have filed the 2015 Voting Rights Advancement Act, a needed legislative fix that was sought to restore VRA protections the Supreme Court removed in Shelby vs. Holder. The new Act cites California as one of the initial 13 states, including New York and 11 Southern states, needing oversight and voter protection in select counties, due to chronic voting access issues faced by minority and naturalized citizens.
It is this congressional re-galvanizing behind the VRA and the upcoming 2016 election season, that's also prompted a voting rights call-to-action by the diverse coalition of advocacy/civil rights organizations, faith-based/interfaith entities, community groups and labor unions at local, state, regional and national levels. The coalition includes the ACLU, Holman United Methodist Church, SEIU 721, Asian Americans Advancing Justice, the Teamsters, among others.

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