

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## COURT RULES LA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT VIOLATED ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS IN TURNING VAN DE KAMPS CAMPUS OVER TO CHARTER SCHOOL AND THE MAYOR'S WORKFORCE PROGRAMS

### **Adverse Ruling Immediately Follows Scathing State Controller's Office Audit That Reported LACCD Officials Refused To Turn Over Van de Kamps Construction Records**

In a hard fought victory for the Van de Kamps Coalition, Superior Court Judge Ann I. Jones issued a tentative ruling today that the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) failed to do necessary environmental studies in its conversion of the \$86 million taxpayer bond-funded community college campus at the former Van de Kamps Bakery site to a lease by a 9-12 charter high school. The charter high school, the Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools, is politically connected having former Board of Directors members Eli Broad and Richard Riordan, and another Los Angeles Superior Court Judge, David Cunningham III, on its current Board. Today's ruling has negative implications for the lease of another part of the campus to unemployment programs funded and championed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

In sometimes heated argument, Judge Jones admonished attorneys for the LACCD that " You stood before your Board and lied when you said no environmental documents were needed." A visibly irritated Judge Jones characterized some of the LACCD's attorney's arguments as "intellectually insulting".

The Court's final ruling, likely to remain the same as the tentative ruling today, normally would result in an immediate nullification of the LACCD's lease with the Alliance Charter School and an order commanding the LACCD to comply with the environmental laws. However, given that the Alliance School has just started another year occupying Northeast community college campus, all of the parties and the judge acknowledged that the Court's order must be sensitive to avoid a negative impact upon the innocent high school students occupying the community's college campus. Daniel Wright, the attorney who represented the Van de Kamps Coalition in the successful litigation, has offered to meet and confer with attorneys for the LACCD and the Alliance Charter School to try to resolve the case now that LACCD has lost on the merits. A future hearing on how to bring the District into compliance with the environmental laws may be the subject of a future court hearing.

The Steering Committee of the Van de Kamps Coalition was pleased with the outcome. "This is a vindication of the facts we have spent over two years trying to get the LACCD Board of Trustees to accept," said Laura Gutierrez. "Now something must be done to relieve the harm done to our community by what, even the Judge, called 'lies' of District

personnel. The substantial relief we sought in the lawsuit must be granted now that Court found in our favor on the merits. We should never have had to go through this just to get the LACCD to obey basic laws. There is a cancer of corruption growing on our community college and today, the Superior Court made a grave diagnosis that cannot be ignored by the District Attorney, the California Attorney General, and the Civil Grand Jury.”

“We could never have won this without the expertise and tireless dedication of our attorney, Dan Wright,” said Steering Committee member Miki Jackson. “He believed in this cause and has stuck with us through years of thankless effort. We are not done yet. We still have an appeal on our second lawsuit regarding the same issues over the leasing of the historic bakery building to the City for the Mayor’s pet unemployment projects, but today’s ruling should shake up the bureaucrats in the Mayor’s Office that they are next for scrutiny.”

Today’s dramatic court hearing comes on the heels of the State Controller’s scathing audit of LACCD - an audit triggered by information provided by the Van de Kamps Coalition and its attorney. That audit reported that LACCD officials were withholding Van de Kamps construction records to impede State Controller Chiang’s investigation and that LACCD improperly awarded a contract to an unqualified firm to be the District’s Inspector General.

“We will never give up until we have set this right, and our community has the promised satellite college campus that we all are paying for on our tax bills. Score a couple victories for the little guys,” said Ms. Jackson.

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