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## **WESSON LEADS CELEBRATION OF LA'S "LEGACY OF FIRSTS"**

In recognition of African American Heritage Month, Los Angeles City Council President Herb Wesson, the first African American Council President, has organized the City Hall Exhibit, "Legacy of First".

The exhibit displayed along the City Hall Bridge Gallery recognizes the contributions and leadership of African Americans who have distinguished themselves in the service of Los Angeles and California.

Council President Wesson each year organizes the City Council's commemoration of African American Heritage Month. In 2010, the "Hail to the Chief" exhibit was a presentation of the United States' first African American President, Barack Obama, along with Michelle Obama as the nation's first African American First Lady. Last year's "At Your Service" exhibit profiled the City's African-American General Managers and those in city leadership positions.

"Legacy of Firsts" honors our trail-blazers and pioneers whose legacy is the doors of opportunity that are now open for other to follow," said Council President Wesson. "We want to inspire the next generation so that they understand that there is no limit to their future, and that they should aspire to great things."

The display recognizes African-American's significant role in our City government since its early history. Honorees include Tom Bradley, the City's first African-American Mayor, Rita Walters, the first African-American woman to be elected to the City Council, Kamala Harris, the first female African-American Attorney General, Willie Brown, the first African-American Speaker of the Assembly, and Leslie N. Shaw, Sr., the first African American Postmaster for Los Angeles.

"The accomplishments and contributions of the individuals honored this year have contributed to making Los Angeles and California the great city and state

they are today,” said Wesson. “They stand as an example of leadership and outstanding public service to not only the African-American community, but all communities. Everyone is encouraged to visit the exhibit.”

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# RITA WALTERS

- Commissioner, Board of LA Public Library  
2002 – Present
- Member, LA City Council, District 9  
1991 – 2001
- President, LAUSD Board  
1979 – 1991



Rita Walters is the first African American woman to serve as President of Los Angeles Unified School District and the first African American woman Council Member for the City of Los Angeles.

Walters follows Ms. Fay Allen, the first African woman LAUSD Board Member (1938-1939) and the Rev James Jones, the first African American President of the LAUSD (1965-1966). Walters served on the City Council representing the 9th district, succeeding Gilbert Lindsay in 1991.

During her tenure on the City Council, Walters chaired the Arts, Health and Humanities Committee, which reviewed matters related to the Library Department for the City Council. She was a strong advocate for “environmental justice,” working to discourage random dumping in South Los Angeles. A special point of pride for the Councilwoman was her work in the district to turn a surplus city owned pipe supply yard into the Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park. Named for the former Congressman, who served the area for many years, the park is a place to experience a natural setting for inner city residents.

Walters started the revitalization of Central Avenue and created the “Central Avenue Jazz Festival.” Along with “Downtown On Ice,” a celebration of winter that brings ice skating to downtown, these events have become traditions that continue to flourish in Los Angeles.

Prior to her years of service on City Council, Rita Walters served on the Los Angeles Unified School District’s Board of Education and was a teacher in the Adult Division of the School District for four years. Walters earned an MBA from UCLA’s Anderson School of Management and a B.A. from Shaw University. Walters is currently a Member of the Board of Library Commissioners for the Los Angeles Public Library.

