

# NEWS

From

# Richard Alarcón

Councilmember, 7th District



Room 425, City Hall • 200 North Spring Street • Los Angeles, CA 90012 • (213) 473-7007 • FAX (213) 847-0707

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**Contact: Becca Doten**  
213-847-7777 (office)  
213-219-5534 (cell)

## ALARCÓN INTRODUCES MOTION TO CREATE CITY-WIDE “WORSHIP WATCH” PROGRAM

**Los Angeles, CA** – Today, Los Angeles City Councilmember Richard Alarcón introduced a motion to create a city-wide “Worship Watch” program to be coordinated by the Los Angeles Police Department. The creation of this program was inspired by three recent arson attacks against places of worship in the San Fernando Valley. The “Worship Watch” program will be modeled after the successful Neighborhood Watch and Business Watch programs and will be available for all places of worship to join. The program will bring together religious leaders from local places of worship with the Los Angeles Police Department providing coordination of the program, trainings on how to protect the place of worship and information on crime statistic in the community, giving participants the opportunity to work together to increase safety both at the place of worship and in the surrounding community.

“A crime against a place of worship is a crime against all of us and our fundamental first amendment right to freedom of religion,” said Councilmember Alarcón. “Los Angeles is the most religiously diverse city in the world and Worship Watch will bring together leaders from mosques, churches, temples and synagogues for the common goal of increasing safety and reducing crime. This program will be a big win both for the individual places of worship and for the community as a whole.”

In the last several months there have been arson attacks on three places of worship in the San Fernando Valley. Most recently, on April 20, 2008 a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the steeple of the Church of the Nazarene in Panorama City. A month and a half earlier, on March 6, authorities investigated a non-injury fire that was apparently sparked by a Molotov cocktail and caused slight damage to the Arleta Assembly of God Church. Additionally, on Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> there was a 2:00 AM Molotov cocktail attack at the Bernard Milken Jewish Community Campus in West Hills. Rewards have been offered in all three of these cases and the investigations are on-going.

The Worship Watch program will include informational and training sessions for participating members, including trainings on “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” (CPTED), information on how to spot and prevent potential crimes and how to respond to crimes when they occur. Like with the Neighborhood Watch program, participants in the program will receive signage to indicate they are participating in the program.

The first meeting to kick-off the creation of the program and receive feedback from local religious leaders will be held on Thursday, May 29<sup>th</sup> at the Marvin Braude Constituent Center (Conference Room 1B) at 6:00 PM. The program is co-sponsored by Councilmember Richard Alarcón, the Valley Interfaith Council, the Human Relations Commission and the Los Angeles Police Department. The agenda will include an update on the arson investigations, crime prevention techniques and an opportunity for participants to engage in a conversation of best practices, thoughts and concerns.

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