

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 15, 2009

Contact: Becca Doten

213-847-7777 (office)

213-219-5534 (cell)

ALARCÓN ANNOUNCES “BILLBOARD REDUCTION TRADE PROGRAM” TO DRAMATICALLY REDUCE BILLBOARD BLIGHT AND BRING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF NEW REVENUE

Los Angeles, CA – Today, Los Angeles City Councilmember Richard Alarcón joined with labor leaders, the business community, Neighborhood Council representatives and community members to announce a sweeping “Billboard Reduction Trade Program.” The program targets existing legal billboards, creating a program whereby billboard companies can voluntarily reduce the number of billboards they own in exchange for erecting a smaller number/square footage of billboards in pre-designated areas. The program would include labor agreements to ensure good wages and conditions for those installing the signs and would include provisions for signs to be placed on city property, creating a new and on-going revenue source for the City.

“My proposal is a win-win-win, reducing billboard blight in our communities, creating good-paying jobs and bringing in much-needed, on-going revenue to our city coffers,” said Councilmember Alarcón. “This program creates the needed incentive for billboard companies to reduce their overall signage and ensures that any new construction will not impact our residential neighborhoods.”

Stuart Waldman, President of the Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA), said, “Councilmember Alarcón's 'Billboard Reduction Trade Program' provides autonomy for businesses by allowing the billboard companies to voluntarily reduce billboards, rather than mandating their removal. It also creates an opportunity for the city to collect revenue without adding an additional burden on the business community, which is especially important during these uncertain economic times.”

Kevin Norton, Assistant Business Manager of IBEW Local 11, said, “We applaud Councilmember Alarcón for driving the creation of new, good-paying jobs in our city. With unemployment over 10% and so many local families struggling to make ends meet, the new jobs that are created through this ordinance will mean at least 50 fewer families facing the uncertainty of how to pay for their next meal, health care or schooling.”

On May, 26, Alarcón introduced a verbal amending motion instructing the Planning Department to review the feasibility of creating a sign trade program. At today’s Council meeting, Councilmember Alarcón introduced a follow-up motion, amending the billboard ordinance that is currently navigating the city committee structure, instructing the City Attorney and other appropriate departments to add a “Billboard Reduction Trade Program” component to the ordinance. The motion instructs the City Attorney to include provisions for prohibiting signage near sensitive areas, such as single family dwellings, the ability for the City to use digital billboards for emergency and public service announcements and a prohibition of alcohol advertising on City property. The motion has been referred to the Planning and Land Use Management Committee for a hearing.

The program has strong interest from billboard and advertising companies, including the single largest billboard operator in Los Angeles, Lamar Advertising Company. Lamar has distributed a proposal expressing interest in a “Billboard Reduction Trade Program,” and, if one were implement, their proposal states that they will reduce the total number of billboards they have in Los Angeles from 4,000 signs to only 500 signs. There are approximately 8,000 legal billboards in Los Angeles, so this would mean, according to their accounting, an initial reduction of billboards by 44% and revenue to the City of \$970,000 in demolition permits and \$2 million in other City fees. Additionally, their proposal also states that if 100 of the 500 signs were relocated on City property, the city would generate \$6 million a year in revenue and at least 50 jobs would be created. As other companies choose to participate in the program, additional revenue and jobs would be created and the overall number and square footage of billboards in the City would be further reduced.