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**U.S. Senator Barack Obama to Address National Housing Agenda:
More than 800 to Attend Chicago Fair Housing Reception**

CHICAGO (June 24, 2005) – 39 years after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. marched for open housing in Chicago, equal housing opportunity has much unfinished business. At the national level, the Bush administration, while calling for an “ownership society,” has proposed cuts to the programs and funding that help make the American dream possible for many, including immigrants, minorities, and the poor. Housing discrimination, which still occurs all too frequently, also continues to frustrate minority and other groups from accessing opportunity communities in Chicago and across the nation. At the same time, there has been broad recognition on the part of public officials, housing industry groups and others of the importance of access to affordable housing in areas of economic opportunity and home ownership as a means for creating wealth, fueling economic growth, and stabilizing communities.

U.S. Senator Barack Obama will address these and other issues in a keynote address on **Friday, June 24th at the 39th Annual Reception of the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities (LCMOC), a nationally recognized fair housing group based in Chicago, to be held at the Chicago Westin River North, 320 N. Dearborn Avenue in Chicago from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.** Themed “Achieving the Dream: Accessing Equal Housing Opportunity,” the event is part celebration, part call to action. Senator Obama will speak on the role of the federal government in securing equal opportunity in housing, as well as what it will take through national and other policy efforts, to ensure that the dream of Dr. King remains alive.

“It is no secret that where one lives – determines much of one’s life and future – the quality of one’s job, the quality of one’s education, even at times the quality of one’s health and life,” said U.S. Senator Barack Obama. “Housing that builds stronger communities within our cities and creates the mixed income communities that attract and support jobs and civic life. And as we renew that commitment there is no more appropriate place to be than here at the celebration of the Leadership Council’s 39th year – whose steady vision has forged a path to a more open, a more just, society.”

“Our nation is at a critical juncture when it comes to issues of fair housing, and there is no better person to speak on these issues than Senator Barack Obama,” said President and CEO of the Leadership Council Howard Stanback. “Although still not sufficient, great strides have been made since the Council was founded in the 1960s. Whether that progress continues into the future, depends on our vigilance, our awareness and our actions.”

The event is sponsored by The Northern Trust Company and hosted by the Leadership Council's Board of Directors, comprised of leading law, banking, corporate, and civic leadership. Other sponsors included the Chicago Dwellings Association, HSBC, Washington Mutual, Harris Bank, and Bank One. Individual tickets are \$175 and can be reserved by calling (312) 341-5678. Discount tickets for nonprofits are also available. All proceeds from the event will go to support the programs of the Leadership Council, a non-profit agency.

The Leadership Council was founded by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leading civil rights, civic, and religious leaders, as a product of the Chicago Freedom Movement campaign for open housing. For more than 39 years, the agency has provided leadership and developed innovative programs to improve fair housing in the region and across the country. Today, agency programs provide direct support, including primarily education and advocacy assistance, to more than 4000 families in the region.

The Gautreaux II Program, one of the Leadership Council's most successful programs, provides "mobility" counseling to Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) residents who are interested in relocating to non-segregated, "opportunity" communities in the area. Gautreaux II provides education to residents as well as conducts outreach to local landlords. In early stages of the program, the Leadership Council helped over 7,500 low-income families in the Chicago area voluntarily move from public housing to privately-owned housing over a 20-year period.

For more information on the Leadership Council, please call 312-341-5678 or visit their website at www.lcmoc.org.

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