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TEENS, POLICYMAKERS DISCUSS DREAM ACT, JUVENILE DEATH PENALTY,

REDEPLOY ILLINOIS AT YOUTH SUMMIT

April 29 – CHICAGO, IL. Over 1,300 students at 26 high schools from across the state are participating in the 2004 Illinois Youth Summit. This year's theme is "Teens, Justice, and the Law." Students at this year's Summit, organized by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago will convene at the Dirksen Federal Building on April 30 prepared to take positions on three topics: legal status for unauthorized high school students, local alternative programming for youthful offenders, and the death penalty for juveniles. More than 200 delegates representing students at 26 Illinois high schools will come together to share what they have learned and question policymakers and experts from Illinois and Washington, D.C. via satellite teleconference. At the conclusion of the Summit, students will convene a Town Hall Meeting to take a position on the issues.

In preparation for the Summit, students in each of the participating schools conducted the 2004 Illinois Youth Summit Survey to find out how their peers felt about the issues. More than 2100 students across Illinois responded. Prior to attending the Summit, students researched the issues and conducted a service project to share what they learned with others in their communities. "For over a decade, the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago has offered Illinois students a valuable, hands-on learning experience unlike any other they are likely to experience in or out of school," said U.S. Senator Peter Fitzgerald, a supporter of the

Summit. The Illinois Youth Summit is April 30, 9:00 AM – 1:15 PM, in Courtroom 2525 at the Dirksen Federal Building in Chicago.

The Summit issues were chosen by the students themselves and reflect pending legislation at both the federal and state levels. The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) sponsored by U.S. Sen. Richard K. Durbin, proposes to allow an estimated 600,000 unauthorized non-citizens ages 12 to 20 enrolled in pre-college U.S. schools who have lived in the U.S. for at least five years the opportunity to become legal permanent residents. Under Redeploy Illinois, Illinois counties could redirect juvenile offenders who are not guilty of a Class X forcible felony from state-run confined facilities to community-based treatment and counseling programs. Funds to run the program would come from money saved by the Department of Corrections, which would otherwise need to house the offending youth. The third topic, whether Congress should enact a ban on executing persons for crimes they committed when they were under 18 years of age was, in part, a response to Lee Malvo, one of the snipers who left ten people dead in fall 2002 in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. Malvo was 17 at the time of the killings. He was tried and convicted in Virginia, one of 22 states that permit the execution of those who committed crimes when they were 16 or older.

This year, Congressman Danny K. Davis (D) from the 7-IL Cong. Dist. will be a panelist at the Summit in Chicago and will share his views on the juvenile death penalty. Joining Congressman Davis will be David Baitman, Office of Cook County Public Defender, Thomas Sullivan, Jenner & Block LLP and Benjamin Wolf, American Civil Liberties Unions. David Gorak, Midwest Coalition to Reduce Immigration, Fred Tsao, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Ed Yohnka, American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois will answer questions and offer opinions on the DREAM Act. Chip Coldren, John Howard Association, Frank Kopecky, University of Illinois-Springfield and Catherine Ryan, Office of the Cook County States Attorney

will discuss Redeploy Illinois. The panel moderator will be James A. Klenk, Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP.

Teleconference participants from Washington include Josh Bernstein, National Immigration Law Center, Jack Martin, Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), Sue Bunawardene-Vaughn, Amnesty International, William G. Otis, George Mason University Law School, and Diann Rust-Tierney, American Civil Liberties Union. J. Robert Flores, Administrator at the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice will moderate the Washington, D.C. panel.

Results of the 2004 Illinois Youth Summit Surveys reveal that 69% support the DREAM Act, 18% are against and 13% do not know. 58% of students favor diverting state prison funds to counties under Redeploy Illinois, 21% oppose and 21% don't know. Students are split on whether there should be a ban on the death penalty for juveniles with 49% in favor, 46% opposed, and 5% that don't know. (Full results are on-line at <http://www.crfc.org/summit2004>.)

For their service project, students at Wells Academy in Chicago organized a political rally about the DREAM Act attended by U.S. Senator Durbin. Students at Glenbard East High School in Lombard invited a panel of experts on issues of juvenile justice and Redeploy Illinois. Stevenson High School students in Lincolnshire taught eighth graders at neighboring Aptakisic Jr. High School about the juvenile death penalty. "Our visit to Aptakisic allowed us to see how younger teenagers felt about the death penalty. From the beginning of the period, many students had intelligent comments to contribute to the discussion and by the end of the class, the entire class was involved," said a Stevenson student.

The Summit is hosted and co-sponsored by the U.S. District Court of Northern Illinois. Funding for the 2004 Illinois Youth Summit is provided by the McCormick Tribune Foundation with additional support and assistance provided by the Constitutional Rights Foundation (Los

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Non-profit and non-partisan, CRFC has supported elementary and secondary schools in their fundamental task of educating students for constructive participation in our democratic society since 1974. In addition to the Summit, CRFC serves K-12 students and teachers through initiatives in Chicago, throughout Illinois, and across the United States, and sponsors democracy education partnerships between classes in Illinois and other parts of the world.

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