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Lutheran Groups Honor Legislator for Commitment to People in Need

*Ill. Sen. Kwame Raoul
Receives 2010 'Paul Simon' Award*

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SPRINGFIELD, Illinois – On April 21, State Senator **Kwame Raoul** (D-Chicago, 13th District) received the annual *Paul Simon Courage in Public Service Award* during Lutheran Day activities at the State Capitol. The award was presented by a coalition of Lutheran-affiliated social service, health care and advocacy groups. The award was created in 2004 by several Lutheran organizations, along with Patti Simon, widow of the late senator, to recognize Illinois public officials who demonstrate a commitment to just, compassionate and responsible public policy.

“We are honored to present the Paul Simon Courage in Public Service Award to Sen. Raoul for his persistent public leadership for balanced and restorative justice – especially in the area of our state’s policies regarding juvenile youth,” says Daniel Schwick, director of church and government relations at Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) and coordinator of Lutheran Day. Schwick presented the award to Sen. Raoul, who represents the Hyde Park/Kenwood area on the south side of Chicago.

Sen. Raoul was the co-sponsor of Senate Bill 2275, which raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction in Illinois from a youth’s 17th birthday to his or her 18th birthday for misdemeanor offenses. The bill also set up a task force to study the effect of raising the age for felony offenses. The bill became effective on January 1, 2010. One thing the bill does is to extend the services of the juvenile court – such as mental health, drug treatment and more appropriate community-based services – to the 17-year-old age group.

“The Paul Simon Courage in Public Service Award serves as a reminder of the progress we can make together when we stand up and do the right thing,” Sen. Raoul said. “I’m honored to receive this award and look forward to working with those who embrace its ideals, as we balance compassion and responsibility in government.”

Lutheran Day was created in 2004 when two Lutheran human service provider organizations – LSSI and Lutheran Child and Family Services of Illinois (LCFS) – recognized that they had common concerns relating to their partnerships with state government, specifically with inadequate state funding for human services and the larger issue of inadequate and unsustainable state revenue to cover the cost of all state programs. As a result of those meetings, the two organizations

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resolved to reach out to other Lutheran human service provider organizations in Illinois to combine and organize their voices and constituencies to support the strengthening of the public-private human services safety net in Illinois

Today, Lutheran Day sponsoring organizations include: Lutheran Social Services of Illinois; Lutheran Child and Family Services; Lutheran Life Communities; Advocate Health Care; Lutheran Senior Services; Mosaic; Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services; Concordia Place; and Saint Luke Ministries. Lutheran Advocacy-Illinois, a grassroots justice advocacy organization, also sponsored Lutheran Day.

For more information on Lutheran Day, visit www.LutheranDay.org.

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