

For Immediate Release

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## **Local Students Take Policy-Making into Their Own Hands**

### **YMCA teaches DC youth ethical governance in a two-day working simulation of DC Government's legislative process**

**Washington, DC, March 3, 2011** – As speculation grows as to the priorities and morals of local government officials, the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington is giving local high school students the opportunity to vet issues that will change DC for the better. This Friday and Saturday, YMCA DC Youth & Government participants will play the part of city officials, exercising their knowledge of the city and skills they have learned throughout the program. Amidst growing controversies around the integrity of public officials, it is more important than ever that our youth learn the honest, respectful, and responsible way to run a democracy.

YMCA DC Youth & Government's Legislative Weekend marks the culmination of a year-round program that educates DC high school students on how legislation is created and passed. During this two-day simulation, **taking place on Friday, March 4 and Saturday, March 5 at One Judiciary Square**, students will take charge of the lawmaking process, focusing on realistic bills crafted by their own hand. This program is highly regarded and supported by local government officials, with dignitaries such as Mayor Vincent Gray and Council Member Harry Thomas, Jr. in attendance of the Youth Summit held in November 2010.

"Once the students are sworn in during Opening Ceremony, they take lead while the adults remain silent," states Jason L. Reimer, Chairman and Founder of the YMCA DC Youth & Government program. "This program is student-led and student-driven, and the bills that pass the Youth Committee and Youth City Council will go on to the bona fide City Council for consideration."

Established in 2001, the YMCA DC Youth & Government program has given more than 1,000 students throughout the District the forum to learn and discuss critical, nationwide issues with city administrators, elected officials, and peers. Over the course of a school year, students learn invaluable skills in a rigorous but fun curriculum that will enable them to improve their communities for years to come.

"Through the YMCA DC Youth & Government program, high school students across the District of Columbia have an opportunity to speak out and be heard on issues in the city that are important to them," describes Emma Lipscomb, Program Director for the YMCA DC Youth & Government program. "In addition, the program teaches students the importance of civic engagement and the skills to become ethical and responsible citizens."

In the program's short history, one bill (each city council member has a paid high school intern) from our Legislative Weekend has been passed into law by the real DC Government! Thirty-six percent of the YMCA DC Youth & Government alumni have served on community, state, or federal boards and commissions, compared to 3 percent of American adults.

**About the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington**

*The YMCA of Metropolitan Washington has been providing vital programs and services for local adults, children and families for more than 150 years. The YMCA is one of the largest social service agencies in Washington D.C., suburban Maryland and northern Virginia. Last year, the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington touched the lives of 265,000 people through our 17 branches and program centers. For more information, visit [www.ymcadc.org](http://www.ymcadc.org).*

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