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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**MALDEF JOINS FORCES WITH GOLDSTEIN, BORGEN,  
DARDARIAN & HO TO CHALLENGE ABC USD IN DEFENSE OF  
CALIFORNIA VOTING RIGHTS**

*School district accused of violating 2001 California Voting Rights Act*

LOS ANGELES, CA – MALDEF today joined forces with Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho to file suit against ABC Unified School District (ABC USD) for violating the California Voting Rights Act of 2001. The District uses an at-large method to elect its Board of Trustees, which has denied Latino residents the opportunity to elect Board Members of their choice for more than fifteen years. ABC USD is comprised of Artesia, Cerritos, Hawaiian Gardens, part of Lakewood, Long Beach, Norwalk, and La Mirada.

"With the growing Latino student population nationwide, it is particularly important that our democratic processes work to secure adequate opportunity for the Latino community to elect its representatives to participate in school governance," stated **Thomas A. Saenz**, President and General Counsel of MALDEF.

Twenty-three percent of the current voting-age population within ABC USD is Latino, yet there is no Latino representation on the seven-member Board of Trustees. ABC USD's at-large election process does not require candidates to reside in any particular portion or zone of the district, and any eligible voter may vote for any candidate, regardless of where that voter resides. All seven of the current Board members reside in one city, Cerritos, of the seven cities that comprise the ABC USD. MALDEF and Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho argue that this method has led to vote dilution, and has prevented Latinos from electing candidates of their choice or influencing the outcome of Board elections.

Moreover, patterns of racially polarized voting in ABC USD elections have been detrimental to the mobilization of Latino voting power, and have allowed the non-Latino super-majority to overcome Latino voting strength. In the lawsuit, MALDEF and Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho argue for the implementation of a district-based election system, which would provide all voters, regardless of race, an opportunity to elect candidates of their choice and influence election outcomes.

**Laura Ho**, partner at Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho and attorney for the plaintiffs said, "ABC's at-large method of election violates the California Voting Rights Act because racially polarized voting has resulted in vote dilution for Latino voters and denied them effective political participation in elections to the Board."

Olga Rios, a plaintiff in the case, attended ABC USD schools for her entire K-12 education

and has two children in the district. She applied for an open position on the Board two years ago and was interviewed. But, the district decided not to appoint anybody to the position until the next election, despite Olga's exceptional credentials in education, including a Master's Degree in education from Harvard University.

**Ms. Rios** said, "As much as we all like to dream that we now live in a colorblind society, it has been clear to my community for some time now that the ABC school district's at-large method of election prevents Latino voters from electing candidates of our choice."

The right to vote is fundamental to democracy in the U.S., and must be protected for all citizens, regardless of race. MALDEF and Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho support equal board representation for all communities within ABC USD, and will protect the right to a political voice wherever it may be threatened.

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**MALDEF**

*Founded in 1968, MALDEF is the nation's leading Latino legal civil rights organization. Often described as the "law firm of the Latino community," MALDEF promotes social change through advocacy, communications, community education, and litigation in the areas of education, employment, immigrant rights, and political access. For more information on MALDEF, please visit: [www.maldef.org](http://www.maldef.org) or follow on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).*

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