FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***LOUISIANA COURTS MATTER* FRAMES NEED FOR DIVERSITY IN FEDERAL COURTS**

 Louisiana Courts Matter, a coalition of local organizations, and an offshoot of a national coalition, is presenting a panel discussion entitled ***Why Courts Matter: Creating a Diverse and Representative Judiciary***. On March 11, 2014, local author of Gender and Justice and Executive Director of the Newcomb College Institute, Sally Kenney, will join two national speakers, Terry O’Neill, President of the National Organization for Women, and Ellen Buchman, Vice-President of The Leadership Conference on Human and Civil Rights, to address the need for diversity in the federal courts. The Moderator for the panel will be Maria Lopez, Dean of Loyola Law School.

According to Clay Latimer, a representative of Louisiana Courts Matter, most of the nearly 900 federal judges in the United States are white men. “The people of this country are entitled to a representative government and that includes the Judiciary. We are encouraged by the efforts of the present Administration in this regard.” Citing material provided by Lambda Legal, Latimer said, “Forty-four percent of President Obama’s nominees during his first term were women and forty percent were people of color.”

According to Latimer, there are currently 114 vacancies in federal courts around the country. “Vacancies in the federal courts hurt everyone,” Latimer said. “When vacancies on the federal bench are left unfilled, all litigants in our legal system – from civil rights plaintiffs to large corporations – are denied the quick resolution of their cases. We want to raise awareness about why courts matter and why diversity is important.”

The panelists will discuss some of the recent decisions rendered by federal courts that have made differences in the lives of ordinary Americans and will talk about some of the ways citizens can become involved in creating a more diverse and representative judiciary. Theoretically, federal judges are appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate. But, according to Latimer, “The process of nominating and confirming federal judges has become very complicated and cumbersome, and home-state senators play an important role in the process by screening or recommending candidates. But,” Latimer added, “if people understand the process they will also understand how they can have an impact on the results.”

The forum will be held at at 7:00 p.m. on March 11, 2014, at Congregation Temple Sinai at 6227 St. Charles Avenue and is free and open to the public .

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IF INTERVIEWS ARE DESIRED WITH ANY OF THE PANELISTS, ARRANGEMENTS CAN BE MADE THROUGH THE CONTACT INDICATED ABOVE. PHOTOS OF PANELISTS ARE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.