



## Local PVJOBS Participant Chosen to sit with First Lady Michelle Obama During Tonight's State of the Union Address

### For Immediate Release

January 20, 2015

### Contact

Lisa Fitch 323.432.3985

#### Board of Directors

Jim Bickhart

Brad Carson

Gary L. Cook

Michael Dolphin

Richard S. Flores

Dennis Gonzalez

Charri Hearn Schairer

Mark E. Henderson

Kim Suzanne Kovacs

Alfonso Morales

Frank Quiambao

Aubrey Relf

David A. Roberts

Ernest Roberts

4112 South Main Street

Los Angeles, CA 90037

Voice 323.432.3955

Fax 323.432.3995

**Los Angeles** – LeDaya Epps, a PVJOBS participant working on the Crenshaw/LAX Transportation Project, will be seated in the box with First Lady Michelle Obama, Dr. Jill Biden and Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor to the President, at the State of the Union address tonight.

Epps received PVJOBS' Participant of the Year honors last fall for her life transformation and has overcome significant barriers in her journey to Washington D.C.

After spending her childhood in foster care, Epps was adopted by an older sister and graduated from high school. "After graduation, I thought life would be easy, but it didn't happen that way," Epps said. "I didn't know how to get money – what to do or how to do it."

She worked in a hair salon and as a caregiver for a short time before becoming homeless. Epps admits that this was a time when money was scarce and she had to make food last in her household. After two years of unemployment, she went to a job fair and met a representative of the L.A. Black Worker Center. She joined and was referred to PVJOBS, which had secured a laborers "Boot Camp" with Walsh/Shea Corridor constructors and the laborers union local 300. Not only was she the only female selected to graduate the Boot Camp, she finished at the top of her class and was also sponsored by Walsh/Shea Corridor Constructors in June as an apprentice laborer. As a single mother of three, she is grateful for the stability her career offers and the example it sets for her children.

"Ms. Epps epitomizes the drive and perseverance we see in our participants and the dedication of our staff to serving them," says PVJOBS Executive Director Ernest Roberts. "Not only were we able to find Ms. Epps meaningful career track employment, but we have also found the father of her children employment, changing the entire family dynamic."

# # #

*PVJOBS is a nationally recognized, nonprofit organization that advocates for the inclusion of at-risk on major construction projects and works with, unions and more than 130 community-based organizations creating a pipeline of construction job opportunities to local, at-risk residents. These at-risk youth and adults have either come from single-parent homes, have been welfare recipients, did not complete high school, have former gang affiliations, endured homelessness or have been incarcerated. PVJOBS has nearly 16,000 active, job-ready candidates in its database. Since its formation in 1998, PVJOBS has filled more than 7,000 positions, maintaining a retention rate of 89 percent.*