WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47) issued the following statement as President Obama today awarded Sylvia Mendez, daughter of Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez- defendants of the landmark school desegregation case *Mendez v. Westminster*, the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her tireless efforts to educate young people about the desegregation movement and its vital role in the history of the United States. The case, a class action lawsuit filed on behalf of the more than 5,000 Mexican American students in Orange County, made California the first state in the nation to end school segregation.

“It brings great pride to the people of Orange County that Sylvia Mendez will receive this award,” said Sanchez. “Sylvia’s powerful testimony, given at the tender age of nine, led to a landmark decision giving Mexican American families in Orange County access to an abundance of educational resources and opportunities previously restricted by the color of their skin.

“Sylvia has worked her entire life to create opportunities for others, crisscrossing the country to give lectures on the importance of educational equality. Her courage and dedication serve as an example and inspiration to us all. This award - the highest a civilian can receive - honors Sylvia Mendez for her steadfast commitment to the Fourteenth Amendment and her historic contribution to our county and our country.”