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OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT

DON'T CELEBRATE THE KING WITHOUT DOING THE WORK OF THE KINGDOM!

DETROIT – On Monday, January 17, voices from every corner of America will proclaim how much they love, and revere Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Politicians from Republicans, Democrats, and Independents will attend worship services, pay community tributes, send out press releases and make pompous statements about how much he did for this country. They will openly and unashamedly declare how great he was and how much he fought for racial equality. Many will quote passages from his historic *I Have A Dream* speech (the only one unfortunately in which most are even familiar), as they consistently work to turn it into a nightmare. In approaching the King holiday, it is important to remember Dr. King was not just a dreamer. He was a doer. He was a worker. He did not stand on ceremony. He stood on sacrifice. Please do not leave him perched on a mountain top dreaming. He must be brought back down into the valley, still working.

For those who say they believe in Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream for America but not his plan to help change America, you are simply blowing smoke up the rear end of the Statue of Liberty. One cannot be for Dr. King and against the right to vote. One cannot in a single breath talk about, "*we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.*" There is no substance in politicians who proudly proclaim, "*my country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.*" Your song is not pleasing to the ear. Your words are not sweet to the taste. Dr. King said, "*now is the time to make real the promises of our democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sun lit path of racial justice.*" He further indicated that, "*voting is the foundation stone for political action.*" If we really want to celebrate Dr. King, then let us celebrate the passage of the *John Lewis Advance the Voting Rights Act* out of the Senate. Let us pass the *Freedom to Vote Act* out of the House of Representatives. Let us carve out from the filibuster a process to pass the most important measures of our nation, voting rights. We carved out a path to increase the debt ceiling, to appoint judges to the court, and anything else these current obstructionists in the Congress deemed as important. Dr. King fought for freedom and justice. There are those who now appear ready to take away the freedoms that he has won and to leave him with a contaminated legacy of political injustice. The bills currently in Congress, both the House and the Senate are bipartisan in their very nature. They deal with:

- Greater access to the voting booth
- Creation of a federal holiday to allow voting in greater numbers
- Expands voting by mail-in ballots
- Requires public notification before changes are made to voting laws
- Restores federal oversight of state election laws
- Allows same day and automatic voter registration.

The vast majority of Americans, not politicians, in a show of real bipartisanship support these measures. We cannot allow the Republican party, state and national officials, along with two or three democrats to place a stranglehold around the neck of American democracy.

America is at a crossroads. Will we turn back to a nation that has gone bankrupt according to the bank of justice which in 1963 sent back to Dr. King, "*a bad check marked insufficient funds*"? It is past time to collect on this promissory note. Each of us must do our own individual part to preserve the cause for freedom and justice. The right to vote, the right to a full and representative democracy, and the right to equity of opportunity lies on the scaffold in the heart of every American. Will we be-head the cause of democracy for a dogmatic, authoritarian autocracy? Or will we preserve it guaranteeing our continuous freedom and collective security? These are the two questions for every politician. These are the questions for every corporate and business entity. These are the questions for every media outlet. These are the questions for every individual who calls this land their home. The future is in your hands. Democracy is in your hands. The scriptures are very clear on these questions. They simply remind us, "*by their fruit you shall know them,*" Matthew 7:16. For those who simply want to stand around the base of the fruit tree while others have climbed it, gone out on a limb to pluck it, please do not bend over to claim it once the fruit is lying before us down here on the ground.

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