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FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

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Rep. Ford Calls for Community Action Against Gun Violence to Honor Dr. King's Legacy

CHICAGO – In efforts to reduce gun violence and celebrate the life and works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., state Rep. La Shawn K. Ford (D-Chicago) is joining with residents and community leaders in the fight against a rising murder rate in the city. After more than 500 homicides in 2012, Chicago has already seen an increased homicide rate in the first two weeks of 2013.

“On Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday we remember his words, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that; hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.” While government can help make our neighborhoods better, it is ultimately up to us to take back our streets and protect our children from violence,” Ford said. “Our leaders as well as our neighbors have the responsibility to work together to change this culture of violence into a productive and nurturing environment for our families.”

Ford joins senior pastor of the New Birth Christian Center, Dr. Robbie B. Wilkerson in declaring Austin a Murder-Free Zone. Ford and Wilkerson are hosting a contest for residents of the Austin community in a search for the poster that best expresses the declaration of Austin as a Murder-Free Zone. The winning poster will be used in a campaign to fight gun violence in the Austin neighborhood, with the goal to have a poster in the window of every home and business in Austin.

“As a member of the faith community in Austin, I have witnessed first-hand the effects of gun violence in our neighborhood,” Wilkerson said. “It is time for us to move beyond discussions to bring real change. We cannot stand idly by and continue losing our loved ones. We must work together to remove activities that work to destabilize our community and leave us vulnerable to such acts of violence. I intend to work with Rep. Ford to bring together churches, community-based organizations, elected officials, educators, as well as law enforcement agents to declare Austin to be a Murder-Free Zone.”

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Ford believes that reducing violent crime begins with addressing the needs of our society as a whole. He continues to push for quality education in our schools, local economic opportunities, equal access to health care – including resources for mental health – and laws that keep deadly weapons out of the hands of criminals.

“We must work to create jobs, improve schools, and support improved mental health for the communities where drug and gang activity continue to cause the senseless loss of lives,” Ford said. “I will continue to work with community groups and residents to take back our streets and provide a brighter, safer future for our children.”

Ford represents the 8th District, which includes parts of the West Side of Chicago, Oak Park, Berwyn, North Riverside, Proviso Township, Brookfield, La Grange, La Grange Park and Western Springs.

For more information or for details on the poster contest, please contact Ford’s constituent service office at 773-378-5902 or e-mail Ford at repford@lashawnford.com, or visit www.lashawnford.com.

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