



July 1, 2020

## Responding to President Trump's Letter to Chicago

On June 26, 2020, President Trump wrote a letter to Governor Pritzker and Mayor Lightfoot pointing out the violence Chicago has been experiencing. Trump said, "Violence and death, which are disproportionately harming young African Americans, are tragic and unacceptable, particularly on such a shocking scale." I agree with this statement.

But, Trump went on to say, "But to succeed, you must establish law and order," which to many of us is code for the 'get tough on crime' policies which just haven't worked and have saddled too many black men with criminal backgrounds, making it almost impossible for them to find a job. In his letter, Trump says, "If you are willing to put partisanship aside, we can revitalize distressed neighborhoods in Chicago, together." But, if the Trump administration is serious about tackling gun violence and other issues in Chicago, how will furiously attacking elected leaders like Governor Pritzker and Mayor Lightfoot in a published letter help to decrease the bipartisanship that Trump himself says needs to be put aside?

According to the Chicago Tribune, homicides in Chicago are up about 25% for the year so far. On Father's Day weekend, one of the victims was three-year-old Mekhi James, killed on Central Avenue in Austin on the West Side. A Chicago Tribune editorial on June 29 suggested that Governor Pritzker and Mayor Lightfoot call the president on the issue and pursue the offer of help.

If we could get beyond the personal attacks and partisanship, what could the federal government do to help us here in Chicago? Illinois is a donor state when it comes to taxes – we contribute more in taxes than we receive back in support. Our congressional delegation should fight to bring more federal revenue back to Illinois.

Here are five areas where the federal government could help us in Chicago:

1. We need more cooperation with the feds to help solve murder cases and improve the true murder clearance rate. This requires success in true police reform.
2. We need to strengthen, not eliminate, the Affordable Care Act to protect the health of families. To address violence, we recently announced the formation of the West Side Behavioral Health Task Force to bring in mental health care and trauma support to those who need it. Violence is a result of poverty, and must be addressed with human services and support. Limiting access to food stamps (SNAP) must be reversed.
3. We need more federal job recruitment efforts, along with community-based violence reduction interventions that have been shown to work.
4. We need great amounts of additional capital to truly rebuild our communities and put our communities back to work.
5. We need the Department of Housing and Urban Development open more housing grants for Illinois.

Many options are open to us if we have the will to get beyond attacks and get to work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'LSK', written in a cursive style.

La Shawn K. Ford  
State Representative-Eighth District