



November 17, 2015

Happy Thanksgiving,

It all started on Thursday, the 19th day of February, 1795 when George Washington set aside a National Day of Thanksgiving in the United States of America. Many years later, on October 3, 1863, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed by an Act of Congress, an annual National Day of Thanksgiving "on the last Thursday of November, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise".

In this Thanksgiving proclamation, our 16th President says that it is "...announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations are blessed whose God is the Lord... But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, by the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own... It has seemed to me fit and proper that God should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people..."

Since this is our season of thanksgiving, I would like to share some reasons why I am thankful, and I invite you to email me your letters of thanksgiving.

I am thankful for the change underway in the city of Chicago and other cities across this country between the police and Black people. I am thankful that the world now knows that police misconduct is real and it must end. I am thankful that police abuse against Black people has found its way to the light.

I am thankful for the Civil Rights movement and all the people who help make America a better place because of their fight. I'm thankful that because of their struggle, America has a blueprint to fight for fairness and equality.

In the early 1950s, segregation was legal. Many Americans believed it should not be. African Americans went to court to end segregation. In 1954, the Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of public schools.

A law in Alabama said that African Americans had to sit at the back of the bus. In 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks refused to move to the back of a bus. She was arrested. Her church organized a protest. African Americans boycotted the buses until buses were desegregated. This was the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Martin Luther King Jr. helped lead the boycott. He believed in nonviolent protest. He wanted people to fight back using peaceful actions. In 1956, the Supreme Court said that segregation on buses was illegal, so I am thankful for the leaders like Ms. Rosa Parks and Rev. Martin

Luther King Jr, for their leadership and teaching on a nonviolent approach to win freedom and fairness for Black Americans.

I am thankful for other Civil Rights victories during the 1960s - African Americans held sit-ins in 54 cities. They sat at lunch counters that only served food to white people. They would not leave until they were served. In 1963, Congress was discussing a bill to end segregation. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders organized a protest march in Washington, D.C., to show support for the bill. The march on Washington got Americans to pay attention to the civil rights movement.

President Lyndon Johnson worked with Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It banned segregation in schools, at work, and in public places. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 guaranteed citizens of all races and ethnic backgrounds the right to vote. I'm thankful that people from all backgrounds continued the struggle for civil rights today.

So, I am grateful and thankful during these most difficult times for many families that we have a Thanksgiving Holiday, a holiday that allows all of us here on the West Side of Chicago to join Americans all over this county in prayer for peace and thanksgiving.

I would like you to know that as your State Representative, I truly appreciate the years of support. I'm thankful for the years you have allowed me to serve and represent you and our community.

I'm thankful for all the people for taking the time to circulate and sign my nomination petitions to give me an opportunity to be on the ballot for the March 15, 2016 primary election.

I must also say how thankful I am for my entire family and friends for a lifetime of love and support.

I am also thankful to have the opportunity to worship, pray, and increase my faith at St. Martin de Porres Church, led by Father Tom Walsh, located at 5112 West Washington in Chicago.

I am thankful for the hard work of the many West Side ministers and faith leaders.

I'm also thankful for the many men and women serving at food pantries on the West Side of Chicago, especially the food pantry at St. Martin de Porres Church. The food pantries continue to help many families with food during difficult times.

I urge those who can donate to a food pantry to do so, as it is a great way to help families during the upcoming holiday season, and really is a great help anytime to assist our brothers and sisters during times of hardship. If you are already supporting a food pantry, I want to say thank you. If you have the ability to support a West Side food pantry, just call 773-247-2663, and ask how you can help a food pantry near you.

I'm thankful for all of the good teachers in Illinois and I am most thankful for teachers on the West Side of Chicago. Teachers, including child care providers, continue to work as they are under attack in Illinois by Governor Rauner's budget cuts. I thank them for continuing their mission to teach a new generation

of leaders for our city and State. During this time of uncertainty for Chicago Public Schools teachers and staff, I stand with you in the fight and I thank you for your dedication.

I am thankful to all of the West Side firefighters for their courage in putting their lives in danger to help to save others each time they run into a burning building.

I am thankful for the good and respectful police officers here on the West Side who work to truly serve and protect families with respect. These are the police who help to make all of us feel safe, unafraid and protected in our community.

I am also thankful for all the social service providers on the West Side for their fight to provide vital services to the families on the West Side, as Governor Rauner continues to cut vital programs aimed to protect the most vulnerable families, helping to improve the quality of life for families on the West Side.

I am thankful that since the Affordable Care Act was signed in to law, 17.6 million Americans have gained coverage and the nation's uninsured rate now stands at its lowest level ever. It is easier than ever to sign up for coverage - just call 1-800-318-2596 for confidential assistance 24/7. I am thankful for the doctors, nurses and all medical staff for their effort to carry out the mission of the Affordable Health Care Act.

I am also very thankful for every senior citizen on the West Side of Chicago, for their many contributions, fighting to protect our human and civil rights for so many years - thank you.

I am also thankful for the service to our nations by our many veterans, as they have fought and continue to fight to protect our life and liberty here in America.

During these difficult times in Illinois, let's continue to stand together, to continue our fight for fairness and justice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District