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CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE VICKIE BUTCHER CALLS FOR PUBLIC TO STAND UP, SPEAK OUT, AND CONTINUE THE LEGACY OF REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING DURING EL CAJON EVENT HONORING SLAIN CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER

As a young teen, Vickie Butcher heard Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak in a neighborhood barbershop. His courage and commitment inspired her to challenge segregation laws in her own community, years before the Civil Rights Act was passed. She went on to devote her life to public service, winning many awards for her humanitarian achievements. Now a Democratic candidate for the 52nd Congressional District seat being vacated by Duncan Hunter's retirement, Butcher organized a coalition of community leaders to honor Rev. King's legacy. Dozens of people attended this historic event in downtown El Cajon, despite pouring rain. Below is the full text of Vickie Butcher's speech.

TEXT OF SPEECH BY VICKIE BUTCHER AT

“KEEPING REV. KING’S DREAM ALIVE” EVENT IN EL CAJON JAN. 21

Today we are here to honor the memory and extraordinary life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. That life was spent changing the fabric of our culture. It improved our society and made it better. Let us now reflect together on some of those changes – how the lives we lead today have benefitted from Dr. King's efforts and his dreams.

Inspired by Dr. King's courage and commitment, my brother and I decided to challenge segregation—years before the Civil Rights Act was passed. We made reservations at a diner that would not serve black people. At first, they refused to serve us. But we did not leave. We told them we had a reservation, that we were hungry, and that we wanted to eat. Finally, after two hours, they served us cold food. But we savored our victory, because we knew we had done what was right. I have been fighting for what is right ever since.

Fortunately, strides have been made forward in many areas since those days. The Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act were passed by Congress. Segregation was outlawed! Discrimination based on race, gender, or ethnic background was made illegal in hiring, in housing, in athletics, and many other fields. Enforcement remains imperfect, and there has been erosion of some of these rights in our communities, our courts, and our schools. Hate speech on talk radio and even by some public officials is fueling a rise in hate crimes targeting not only African-Americans, but Latino and Hispanic people, Muslim-Americans, and other ethnic and religious minorities.

Although we have come a long way, we have further yet to go.

In the words of Dr. King, “Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy.” Those words are as true today as they were when Dr. King spoke them in his famous “I Have A Dream” speech delivered to an overflow crowd on Capitol Mall in Washington DC.

The specters of poverty and racism have been made evident to all during the nightmare of Hurricane Katrina. But poverty isn’t only in the South. Right here in El Cajon, 16.5% of people are poverty-stricken, including 13.5% of FAMILIES who live below the federal poverty level, according to the 2000 Census. Since the census, the problems have only gotten worse—with inflation now at the highest level in 19 years. Costs of gas, housing, college, and healthcare have skyrocketed—yet wages have fallen, according to the U.S. Labor Department. Middle class families are struggling to make ends meet, and poor folks are struggling just to survive.

Equal pay is not a reality. A black man today earns just 75% of what a white man earns, on average. And a black woman earns even less—just 68% of what a white male worker earns. A recent Supreme Court decision made it much harder for employees to challenge discriminatory pay under the Civil Rights Act. The U.S. Senate is now considering the FAIR PAY ACT to restore equal pay protection.

In a speech given in Memphis the day before Dr. King was slain by an assassin’s bullet, he said, “The issue is injustice.” He pledged to lead a march the next day to protest an unjust court injunction--and support striking garbage workers.

In his later years, Dr. King brought together the most powerful social justice movements of his era—the civil rights movement, the labor movement, and the peace movement. He also sought economic justice for all Americans.

To vitalize our nation’s economy, we must strengthen small businesses, the backbone of our community, while also supporting the needs of workers to have good jobs with good wages—such as new, “green collar” jobs in clean, renewable

energy to help us achieve energy independence. I have owned small businesses. I have organized international business and trade conferences. But I have never forgotten my working class roots—or the feeling of being hungry that day in the diner. Now, more and more people in America are hungry on a daily basis. Choosing whether to buy food for their children, or gas for their car. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Dr. King observed that poverty chains many people to the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

What would Dr. King say if he knew that right here in East County, 40% of WORKING people have no healthcare insurance at all? Or that this President has just VETOED a bill that would have provided healthcare to 60,000 children of American citizens right here in California. Or that our Congressman also voted AGAINST healthcare for children, putting lives of babies and children at risk. The rising cost of healthcare is also one of the most burdensome costs on businesses in our community.

I believe that it's time for America to join all other industrialized nations in the world, and provide affordable healthcare for all—and I believe that if Dr. King were alive today, he would be leading the way on this important issue for us all.

Dr. King in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech said that “sooner or later, all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace” and transform the world into “a creative psalm of brotherhood.” The foundation of such a method is love, Dr. King believed.

Sadly, as in Dr. King's era, our nation is once again torn by war. We are spending \$12 billion every month on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Congressional Budget Office just released a new estimate that the cost of these wars will ultimately reach \$2.4 trillion, if we include the long-term cost of caring for our wounded soldiers and the interest on money borrowed to fund these conflicts.

Our national deficit is at an all time high-\$30,000 for every man, woman and child in America, and our nation is slipping into a recession. Our young military men and women are coming home with traumatic brain injuries, missing limbs and shattered lives. Even our top military advisors now say this war cannot be won. There are better ways to protect our national security!

It is time to bring our troops home, reduce our national debt, and invest in positive programs to help people here at home—such as healthcare, strong public education, putting the SECURE back into Social Security, and providing REAL protection against these devastating wildfires.

Here in the 52nd Congressional district, our share of the Iraq War's cost as taxpayers so far is \$1.2 billion through the end of 2007. Just imagine what else could we have bought with that money. According to research by the National Priorities Project, we could have provided:

Healthcare for 488,989 people.

Or university scholarships for over 182,000 students.

Or nearly 18,000 new elementary school teachers. Or 90 new elementary schools!

Or 3,564 affordable housing units, to house those most in need—such as our many homeless veterans.

Or 22,152 public safety officers—police and firefighters to protect us right here in our community!

Imagine how much sooner we have stopped these terrible wildfires – BEFORE half a million people here were forced to evacuate. Before 1,700 families lost their homes. Before people lost their lives.

I ask you to join with me, speak out, and stand up for what is right. With your help, together we can continue Dr. King's legacy-- making new strides to achieve peace, prosperity, and opportunities for all people in our great nation.

In the words of the immortal Martin Luther King Jr, "Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation. And I want to thank God, once more, for allowing me to be here with you."