



February 22, 2011

Dear Neighbor,

This month marks the 35th anniversary of Black History Month and while we have so much to celebrate, our country still has so much progress to make. What started in 1926 as Negro History Week and 50 years later transformed into Black History Month allows us to reflect on the history of African-American culture and the diaspora that has led to African-Americans living in nations across the globe. It is important as the nation looks back on advancements made in civil rights and social equality we still observe the inequalities and injustices still present in American culture today.

Recently, I held a press conference announcing a study which proves African-Americans are being disproportionately imprisoned compared to Caucasians for drug-related crimes. It was discouraging to learn that in the "war against drugs" African-Americans are more likely to be imprisoned than given opportunities for rehabilitation and addiction recovery, ultimately leading to recidivism. Drug addiction and trafficking affects all races, genders and age groups, not just African-Americans. To see an end to drug-related crime, we must give offenders the opportunity to recover from their addiction and provide rehabilitation back into society, not back into a life of crime.

February also marks American Heart Month and an opportunity to educate our families about heart health for life. Heart disease is the number one killer in America. With simple life changes, you can avoid disastrous damage to your heart and live a happy, healthy life. Take a risk assessment to see what dangers lay in store for your heart and make a resolution to change bad habits before it is too late.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mattie Hunter".

Mattie Hunter
Illinois State Senator
3rd Legislative District

February is American Heart Month

In the past, heart disease and heart attacks were mostly considered a health problem for men; women were often unaware of the risk factors affecting them. Today, research shows 90% of women have one or more risk factors for developing heart disease and more women die of heart disease than the next four causes of death combined, including all forms of cancer. To bring awareness to this growing epidemic in men and women, our nation has celebrated February as American Heart Month since 1963.

According to the American Heart Association, more than 82 million American adults, or one in three, are estimated to have one or more types of cardiovascular disease. On average, 2,200 Americans die of cardiovascular disease each day – that's one death every 39 seconds. Also, heart disease is the number one cause of death among women 20 and older, killing about one woman every minute.

Many people associate cardiovascular disease with heart attacks and strokes, but most do not know cardiovascular disease can also increase risks and damage from other health concerns such as congenital heart defects, arrhythmia and diabetes. Eating healthy, getting physical exercise and managing stress are simple, effective ways to ensure cardiovascular disease is not in your future.

It is important to know and understand the symptoms of heart attacks and strokes in case a loved one suffers one in your presence. Knowing subtle signs to look for beyond sudden pain and shortness of breath will help you respond quickly and potentially save someone's life. Learning Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Emergency Cardiovascular Care (ECC) can help you be prepared in the event of an emergency before medical personnel are able to arrive. It is easy to find CPR and ECC classes near you and some are even offered through the internet.

The AHA has many programs available to help provide educational outreach and personal resources to help your family become more aware of heart healthy life choices. There are programs designed to ease the transition into a diet and exercise plan. Examples such as risk assessment guides, health trackers, and the 12-week BetterU and Life's Simple 7 programs are designed to help you get active, control cholesterol, eat better, manage blood pressure, lose weight, reduce blood sugar and stop smoking.

Visit www.heart.org to learn more about the risks of heart disease and how you can help yourself and those you love avoid this killer.

Legislative News

Disproportionate Justice Impact Study

I held a press conference recently to announce a report revealing African-Americans charged with low-level drug crimes were sent to prison at a rate almost five times greater than whites in 2005, the most recent year for which the comprehensive data was available.

In 2008, I sponsored Senate Bill 2476 creating The Illinois Disproportionate Justice Impact Study Commission to examine the impact of Illinois drug laws on racial and ethnic groups. As a co-chair for the Commission, our independent research uncovered that, among defendants charged with a Class 4, low-level drug possession, 19 percent of African-American defendants were sentenced to prison, compared with 4 percent of white defendants.

In Cook County, the disparity was even greater. African Americans in Cook County arrested solely for Class 4 possession were eight times more likely than whites to be sentenced to prison.

Additionally, statewide arrest data indicated racial disparities in drug arrests occurred in 62 of Illinois' 102 counties, including urban, suburban, and rural areas. Racial disparities for drug arrests varied widely by county but tended to be greater in jurisdictions with smaller populations of non-white residents.

The Commission's key recommendations include:

1. Institute Racial & Ethnic Impact Statements: Legislators should be able to request attachment of a



Racial & Ethnic Impact Statement to bills or appropriation measures that affect criminal offenses, penalties, sentencing, probation or parole policies.

2. **Expand Sentencing Alternatives:** The State of Illinois and local governments should support jurisdictions to maximize use of diversionary programs and sentencing alternatives, including day reporting centers, drug schools, drug courts and other specialty courts, first offender probation, and designated program supervision.
3. **Reduce Barriers to Employment:** In criminal background checks conducted for employers, the State of Illinois should prohibit the inclusion of drug-related arrests without conviction.
4. **Use Drug Forfeiture Funds to Address the Problem:** Jurisdictions should define a fixed portion of existing drug asset forfeiture funds to support treatment and diversion programs in addition to enforcement and prosecution activities.
5. **Fund Alternatives to Incarceration:** The State of Illinois should establish budget policy and priorities to promote fully utilizing existing diversion programs or alternatives to incarceration, as well as the accompanying planning processes and training as supported by Adult Redeploy Illinois.

Human Services Subject Matter Hearing and Governor's Budget Address

As the Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee, I called a subject matter hearing regarding proposed cuts to the State's human services budget in the current fiscal year. Service providers from around the state testified on the negative effect of proposed cuts to vital programs that affect people from all walks of life.

Currently, the State owes small businesses, service providers, schools and others more than \$5 billion, including almost \$169 million in the 3rd Legislative District. Service providers are already struggling to keep their doors open, keep staff at operational levels and maintain quality services. If the proposed cuts take place, vital services will falter and citizens will see programs they rely on shut down.

I am also concerned about more cuts to human services in Fiscal Year 2012 as proposed in Governor Quinn's annual Budget Address. The governor called for budgeting for results in all State programs. I completely agree with Governor Quinn that budgeting based on performance goals will greatly improve our services and, in turn, the quality of life for our families, but I am concerned the proposed cuts will not allow ample time to accurately evaluate current programs.

Budget cuts are just as necessary for stabilizing our budget and economy as reforms and revenue enhancements, and everyone has to tighten their belts. Unfortunately, service providers are increasingly dependent on fundraising efforts to alleviate the burden caused by the loss of State funding. Their staffs' efforts are shifting towards fundraising just to keep facility doors open instead of providing counseling and services, and programs are suffering.

We must be diligent in our endeavor to stabilize our State budget, but we must not lose sight of the needs of the people we represent. I fear with continued cuts to human services our State will revert back to relying on institutions and prisons rather than community rehabilitation. Rehabilitation creates working, tax-paying citizens in place of inmates and patients.

3rd District News

UNITY 2011

The Lunar New Year is the most important holiday for people influenced by Chinese culture worldwide and for Chinese Americans. Their New Year day is like Christmas is to Christians. To celebrate, I attended UNITY 2011, the Greater Chicago Chinese-American



Community's 27th Chinese New Year Party.

I learned a bit about Chinese culture: 2011 is the Year of the Rabbit, year 4709 in the Chinese lunar calendar. The Rabbit symbolizes graciousness, good manners, sound counsel, kindness and sensitivity to beauty. His soft speech and graceful and nimble ways embody all the desirable traits of a successful diplomat or seasoned politician.

(PHOTO)

China President Hu Jintao visits Chicago

I also joined other selected State and city dignitaries in welcoming China's President Hu Jintao to Illinois. His visit is expected to bring new business deals with Chicago and other Illinois cities.



Upcoming Events and Announcements

DuSable Museum Black History Programs

The DuSable Museum of African-American History, the nation's first and oldest black history museum, will present an exciting array of public and educational programs in celebration of Black History Month. Programs are designed to educate, inspire and delight family members of all ages, and will take place at the Museum, located at 740 East 56th Place (57th Street and South Cottage Grove Avenue) in Chicago. For more information please visit <http://www.dusablemuseum.org>.

Museum of Science and Industry's Black Creativity Program

The Museum of Science and Industry is celebrating the 40th anniversary of its Black Creativity Program with a twist. Traditionally, the annual event recognizes African-American achievements in a variety of fields and disciplines, including architecture, engineering, film, medicine and music and has been on display through the month of February in honor of Black History Month.

For the 40th anniversary, a retrospective of past exhibits is on display and additional exhibits and activities are planned throughout the year. A highlight this February is the annual Black Creativity juried art exhibit. Andre Guichard, former curator of the South Shore Cultural Center Fine Art Gallery and co-owner of the popular Bronzeville Gallery Guichard, served as lead juror for this year's competition and says there is a lot to be excited about with this year's show.

The MORE Challenge

The MORE Challenge, an academic enrichment program, is now registering students for its Saturday morning tutoring program. Free tutoring is available for students grades 3-9 performing at or below grade level. Retired teachers from Chicago Public Schools, students from Roosevelt University and public and private sector volunteers provide individualized tutoring on Saturday mornings from 9:00 to 12:00 at South Side Gospel Chapel, 863 East 64th Street, Chicago, IL 60619. For information call 708-224-7334, visit our website:

www.themorechallenge.net, or email Julia E. Preston, juliaepreston@sbcglobal.net

Imagine Englewood If... Town Hall Meeting

“Lead Poisoning: Who Speaks for the Children, our Future?” is the topic of Imagine Englewood if’s Town Hall meeting in connection with our Campaign for a Lead-Free Englewood March 26, 2011 (3:00 pm - 3:00 pm). For more information: Imagine Englewood if..., 6720 S. Stewart Ave, Chicago, IL 60621, Phone: 773.488,6704, <http://www.imagineenglewoodif.org/>

3rd District - Illinois

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