

Friday, January 13, 2012

Santa Fe, NM – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico's Third District released the following statement today in advance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, which is celebrated on Monday, January 16. Luján will join the community to honor the life and legacy of Dr. King at the annual commemorative march in Albuquerque on Sunday.

“As we celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., his enduring message of equality and justice can still be felt today. Dr. King recognized that the diversity of our nation could be one of our greatest strengths. I certainly believe that he was right, and nowhere is that clearer than here in New Mexico. As we celebrate the Land of Enchantment's 100th birthday and reflect on our history, we are reminded of the unique heritage and influence of its many people, many cultures, and many histories – who have joined to provide enduring contributions that make New Mexico such a special place.

“Dr. King challenged a nation to confront its difficult past and its current inequities. He inspired a generation to stand up and take action in the face of hatred and racism, to speak out in the face of discrimination, and to demand the rights and respect that all individuals deserve.

“Dr. King's strength was not just in shining a bright light on that which needed to be remedied, but lighting a fire inside so many to take action, from marching on Washington to working in our own communities to help those in need. He once said, ‘Life's most persistent and urgent question is: ‘What are you doing for others?’” This legacy continues to echo to this very day and this message is just as relevant now as it was more than four decades ago.

“While our nation has certainly made important progress thanks to the efforts of Dr. King, unfortunately, we continue to face some of the challenges, such as poverty and inequality, which spurred Dr. King to action. Our nation has achieved great heights as a global leader and economic superpower, yet in the richest nation, we still see those without health care and millions struggling to find work to support their families. Disparities continue to plague minority communities, where African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics are less likely to graduate than their peers, limiting their opportunities and creating a cycle of poverty that can be difficult to break.

“Each year we hear the powerful words of Dr. King – demanding equality and demanding the best of ourselves – and each year we honor him with words and action. We know that our work must continue, and that together we can be the change we wish to see in the world, the change that Dr. King so eloquently advocated for. Because every day that we keep his memory and his message alive, we are one day closer to fulfilling Dr. King’s dream.”

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