

Danvers, Massachusetts, 01923
April 6, 1968

The Honorable William Bates
1317 New House Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20515

My dear Mr. Bates:

As one of your constituents I urgently request that you support any and all legislation which may improve opportunities for the oppressed people of our country. I feel that such legislation is immediately necessary for disadvantaged people of all races, but are particularly interested in the lot of the Negro and the American Indian. They have borne such an unfair burden of inequality for so long that I believe the white majority owes them much more than "a fair shake" until some chance for a balance is reached.

The death of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is the immediate cause of this letter, but I wish you to know that I, a white citizen, have long felt a burden of guilt which must be partially assuaged through legislation -- though I realize that there are many other fronts upon which we must all act, as well. The problem of inequality of opportunity in this land of equality and opportunity is, I believe, not only a major one, but is perhaps one of our most pressing ones. As such, funds should and could be available either through reductions in war spending or directly from increased taxes. If funds make choices necessary, I suggest that a particular sum of money spent upon improvements at home would make more of a favorable impression upon the world community than the same amount in foreign aid. Indeed, we cannot afford to show ourselves unequal to the challenge of justified unrest.

Specifically, I support strong Fair Housing legislation, since fear and self-interest dominate this area so strongly that individuals cannot do the job alone. As long as Negroes and other minorities are forced to live in ghettos, the effectiveness of all other measures will be markedly undermined.

Thank you for your conscientious representation.

Sincerely yours,

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