

# The Iowa African-American Journal

Volume 10, Issue 2

Fall 2004

## 10 Reasons Why Every African American Must Vote!!

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**George C. Baugh**

Pella—term expires April 2006

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Prepared in conjunction with the NAACP's "Lift Every Voice and Vote" Campaign

1. **Every vote counts, every vote is important.** When NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume first ran for public office – Baltimore City Council in 1979 – he won by **three votes**.

2. **Your vote can determine the quality of public education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

The winners of this election will decide how much money should be spent on **reducing class size**;

They will decide if federal monies should be used to help secure bonds for **new school construction** and renovations of older facilities;

They will decide if it is worthwhile to invest in **teacher training** and hiring new teachers;

They will decide how much money should be spent on **wiring our schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**;

They will decide if schools should rely on a single examination to determine important decisions (such as graduating from high school or promoting students to the next grade), despite the fact that leading education experts nationwide **recommend multiple measures of student performance** for such decisions.

They will decide if federal money should be spent on strengthening our public schools or if it should be used to support private academies for a few, select students through **school vouchers**.

3. **Your vote can determine if the dramatic racial, ethnic and gender disparities that exist in our health care system today should continue.**

The winners of this election will decide if subscribers to Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) deserve a serious "**Patients' Bill of Rights**" to ensure that consumers: 1) can hold health insurance companies responsible for medical decisions they may make, which result in harm or death to the patient; 2) can seek the services of a specialist when no specialist is available through the plan; and 3) women can use their **ob/gyns as their primary care doctors**.

They will decide if racial and ethnic minority Americans should continue to suffer disproportionately from many severe health problems and have **higher mortality rates** than whites for many treatable health conditions.

4. **Your vote can determine the crucial and life altering decisions about the nation's criminal justice system.**

**"Driving While Black"** - Statistics are gathered at national, state and local levels, or if racial profiling continues to be an all-too-real, yet undocumented, problem for drivers of color.

(Continued on page 2)

## 10 Reasons Why Every African American Must Vote!

*(Continued from page 1)*

**Law Enforcement and Police Brutality** – Will it continue to be tolerated and allowed to continue to exist, or will a comprehensive approach be implemented to rebuild the trust and integrity of those charged with protecting and serving our neighborhoods?

The **death penalty** - Will it continue to be handed down in a racially discriminatory manner or will a moratorium on executions be put into place until the stark racial disparity, prosecutorial misconduct, inadequate representation and irrefutable guilt or innocence is decided?

Based on your vote, the winners of this election will or will not establish and support programs to address the **disparate treatment of ethnic minority youth** by almost every state and municipality in the nation;

The winners will or will not support policies to allow voters who are disenfranchised because of a past felony conviction to **regain their basic right to vote** once they have paid their debt to society.

The winners will or will not address the sentencing disparities that are leading to more and **more people of color being put behind bars**.

5. Your vote can decide if we as a nation should have comprehensive, sane and sensible **gun control** laws that make it harder for criminals and children to get guns and easier for law enforcement agencies to trace guns that are used in a crime, accidents and suicides.

6. Your vote can decide if it should be easier for the federal government to get involved in investigating, prosecuting and preventing **hate crimes** across our country.

7. Your vote can decide if the federal government will work to expand and ensure **economic opportunities** to all Americans including those historically locked out.

The winners of this election will decide if **predatory lending** should be allowed to continue to ruin lives and communities, or if these unscrupulous banks and individuals should be put out of business;

They will decide if the **Community Reinvestment Act** should remain strong and continue to benefit untold millions of American people, neighborhoods and communities;

They will decide if the **"New Markets" initiatives, including Empowerment Zones**, should be allowed to continue to bring economic revivals and prosperity to areas of our nation that have been left out of the strong economic times enjoyed by so many Americans;

8. Your vote can determine the course of the **American Judiciary** for much of this century.

The next President is likely to nominate, and the US Senate will confirm or reject, as much as **one third of the Justices to the nine member US Supreme Court**;

The next President will nominate, and the US Senate will confirm, reject, or ignore people, as they are now, to fill as many as **100 vacancies on federal benches** across the nation. Many of the nominees waiting for confirmation are minorities.

These justices may determine the fate of issues as diverse and important as **Affirmative Action, school desegregation, workplace discrimination, basic civil rights, police brutality, voting rights, religious freedom, sexual harassment, prayer in school, death penalty appeals, immigration, welfare reform, the 2000 Census and school vouchers**.

9. Your vote can determine if minority members of Congress will be able to assume positions of power. Three African Americans are in line to Chair Committees in the House of Representatives. Twenty -three African Americans are in line to chair Subcommittees in the House of Representatives.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## 10 Reasons Why Every African American Must Vote!

*(Continued from page 2)*

### 10. Your vote can determine Social Security's future.

Raising the **retirement age to 70 hurts African American** families, because far too many African Americans will die before reaching a retirement age limit of 70;

**Social Security** is the only retirement plan for many African American seniors.

## Voting is Your Right and Your Responsibility

# Vote on Election Day November 2, 2004

## ICSAA Prepares to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ceremony is a state celebration sponsored by the Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans.

Next year's event is scheduled for Monday, January 17, 2005 and will feature the presentation of the Annual MLK Lifetime Achievement and Service Project Awards. The Achievement award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to the vision of Dr. King by promoting the racial equality of all people of Iowa. In order to be considered to receive this award, one must have demonstrated a lifetime commitment to diversity and inclusion in his/her communities and in the State of Iowa. The Service Project Award will be presented to the project best representing Dr. King's call to service by strengthening their individual communities.

For more detailed descriptions of the individual awards, see the following pages. Please submit your nominations to the address that is found on the forms.

For more information, please contact the ICSAA at 800-351-4659. Nomination forms are also available on-line at [www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa](http://www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa). All nominations must be postmarked by Friday, December 3, 2004.



The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ceremony is a state celebration sponsored by the Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans. The program includes participating in the nationwide bell-ringing ceremony and features special guests, entertainment, refreshments and the presentation of the Annual MLK Lifetime Achievement Awards. The awards recognize individuals who have demonstrated commitment to the vision of Dr. King by promoting the racial equality of all people in Iowa. In order to be considered for this award, one must have demonstrated a lifetime commitment to helping others, diversity, cultural awareness, and active community participation.

### 2005 Nomination Form Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Lifetime Achievement Award

*Please type or print neatly.*

**Nominee:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Organization (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone / email (home) \_\_\_\_\_

**Person submitting nomination:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Organization (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone / email (home) \_\_\_\_\_

*Include the following with the completed nomination form:*

- A summary of the nominee's contributions that reflect the theme of the award;
- Three (3) letters of support;
- A biographical sketch of the nominee (a resume may be used); and
- Three other items of supportive material: This could include, but is not limited to, pertinent newspaper and/or magazine articles, primary works, published material, etc.

Application materials must be postmarked no later than December 3, 2004. Mail to:

**Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans**  
Department of Human Rights  
Lucas State Office Bldg.  
Des Moines, IA 50319

If you have any additional questions, please call Kim Cheeks  
(515)-281-3274 or (800)-351-4659  
Email: kim.cheeks@iowa.gov  
Visit our website at [www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa](http://www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa)

# 2005

## *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Project*

*State of Iowa*  
*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Planning Committee*

"Everybody can be great because anybody can serve." Americans in communities across the nation took these words of Martin Luther King to heart January 19, 1998, making the King Holiday a day of service – A Day On, Not a Day Off.

With the leadership of national service programs, communities are transforming the observance of Martin Luther King's birthday into a day of service, fulfilling the goal of the King Holiday and Service Act of 1994. Throughout the nation on this day, service activities reflect Dr. King's life and teachings, bring people together, break down barriers, and help solve problems through citizen action.

The State of Iowa Dr. King Planning Committee would like to extend this opportunity for you, as a citizen of Iowa, to get involved by participating in some type of service project to strengthen your community. The Planning Committee will present a Service Project Award to the project best representing Dr. King's call to service. Following are just some examples of worth-while service projects: literacy programs, renovating low-income and senior housing, organizing neighborhood watches, building playgrounds, restoring schools, delivering services to the elderly or homeless, serving as companions to youth or elderly, reading to children at shelters, and mentoring youth.

To be considered for the Service Project Award, your project should be completed (or in progress, if it is an on-going project) by December 2004. Please provide a brief description of your service project and its impact on your community, using the attached form. Mail or fax the completed form to the address or fax number listed. The award will be given to the individual, group or organization whose project has had the greatest impact on their respective communities. The award will be presented at the Annual State of Iowa, MLK, Jr. Ceremony on Monday, January 17, 2005.

**Responses must be postmarked by December 3, 2004.**

**2005  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Service Project**

 Individual

 Group

(Please attach additional pages if necessary)

Name of Project

Contact Person:

Group participants

Address (if a group, please complete for all names) City, State, &amp; Zip

Telephone

E-mail address

Brief description of service project:

Date project started \_\_\_\_\_

Please feel free to submit photographs, videos, or any promotional items involved with your project.

NOTE: these items will not be returned.

Record the total number of hours dedicated to your community service project.

<u>Month 1</u>	<u>Month 2</u>	<u>Month 3</u>	<u>Month 4</u>
Week 1	Week 1	Week 1	Week 1
Week 2	Week 2	Week 2	Week 2
Week 3	Week 3	Week 3	Week 3
Week 4	Week 4	Week 4	Week 4

**Application materials must be postmarked no later than December 3, 2004. Mail to:**

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Department of Human Rights  
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Des Moines, IA 50319

If you have any additional questions, please call Kim Cheeks  
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Email: kim.cheeks@iowa.gov  
Visit our website at [www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa](http://www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa)

## Letters to the Editor

### ***ICSAA Thanks You For Your Support***

The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans would like to thank the community for your support. Please feel free to share your support for the commission and our commitment to improving the lives of African American Iowans. We welcome your comments. Please mail your letter of support to:

Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans  
Department of Human Rights  
Lucas State Office Building  
321 East 12th Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

August 24, 2004

Hi Ladies,

I just wanted to let you know that I saw the latest edition of the newsletter which prompted me to stop by the website. I must admit it had been a while since I had been to the site. I was most impressed by the new look of the site (or maybe it is just new to me). I am also impressed by the remarkable energy displayed by the programming I am seeing come out of your office. There is a lot to do and you are tackling it step by step. Keep up the good work.

Betty Andrews

February 2, 2004

Ms. Kimberly Baxter, Director  
Iowa Commission on the  
Status of African Americans  
Department of Human Rights  
Lucas State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Kimberly:

I am writing in support of the Office on the Status of African Americans. As you are well aware, the state of Iowa, as it relates to African American citizens, is in a crisis. In an email dated August 2003, Jonathan Narcisse, an advocate who has worked tirelessly to promote awareness of issues for African Americans in our state, posed the question, "What if the sky is falling?" He goes on to describe the outcomes of over 150 hours of health hearings in numerous communities across Iowa. The results are not comforting.

His report notes that, in the Cedar Rapids area where African Americans comprise 2.5% of the general population, the five leading causes of death are heart disease, lung disease, genital cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Additionally, African Americans participate in the food stamp program in Linn County at a higher rate than the statewide average.

Even more alarming, however, is Mr. Narcisse's prediction of a future explosion of jail/prison expansion. He notes that

urban populations are flooding into Iowa from Chicago and East St. Louis. He points out that, with this new "immigration" comes homelessness, violent crime and addiction. Mr. Narcisse paints an even darker picture for future epidemics of meth use by stating that, in the past, this had been a white, non-urban plague. He now forecasts ominously that "the victims of meth in Iowa are about to change."

I'm sure you're aware that Iowa has long held the dubious honor of being one of the highest incarceration states for African Americans in the country, and it's only been recently that steps were taken to address, or to at least acknowledge those disparities.

In light of the circumstances stated above, please know that I wholeheartedly support the ongoing efforts of the Office on the Status of African Americans. Further, I urge and implore those who do not fully understand the importance of keeping this office open to learn first hand from you the critical need to monitor issues in the African American community. It is my earnest desire that this office not be dismantled or folded into another entity. This office currently exists to serve, advocate for and be the voice of Iowa's African American citizenry. Indeed, it works to ensure equality on behalf of African Americans living across the state.

Sincerely,

Barbara Culpepper-Scheel

## **Governor Vilsack Appoints New Commissioner**

The Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans welcomes newly appointed commissioner, Ms. Charlotte Westerhaus. She was appointed by Governor Vilsack to serve a four-year term to expire April 30, 2005.

Ms. Westerhaus is the Assistant to the President, and the Director of Equal Opportunity and Diversity at the University of Iowa in Iowa City. She resides in Cedar Rapids.

**ICSAA**

Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans

Department of Human Rights  
Lucas State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319

Staff:

Kimberly Baxter, Director  
Kim Cheeks, Program Coordinator

Phone: 515-281-7283 or 800-351-4659

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Website: www.state.ia.us/dhr/saa

Email: dhr.icsaa@iowa.gov

Fall 2004

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## Across Black Iowa...

### My Pledge to Make A Difference

I pledge to honor the life and works of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I pledge to serve to ensure Iowans will continue to enjoy equality, justice, freedom, and peace.

**Do you wish to make a donation to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ceremony on January 17, 2005, sponsored by ICSAA? If so, please send your gift.**

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home & business): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment Options:** \_\_\_\_\_ Check \_\_\_\_\_ Money Order \$

Please make payable to the Iowa Commission on the Status of African-Americans

Please include my/our name in the Annual Report \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No