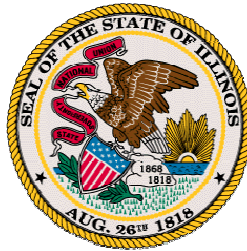


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**La Shawn K. Ford**  
**State Representative**  
**8<sup>th</sup> District**

April 28, 2010

Dear Editor,

**IF NO NATIONAL GUARD, THEN WHAT?**

I would like to take the opportunity to respond to some of the comments that have been made in response to the call made by State Rep. John Fritchey and myself for Governor Quinn to work with Mayor Daley and Chicago Police Superintendent Weis to deploy the Illinois National Guard in an effort to combat the crime and violence that plagues our city streets. Lost in all of the media reports was the brave presence at the press conference of Willie Williams, Sr., who lost his own son to gun violence 4 years ago. The Williams family and 113 families throughout Chicago just this year grieve the loss of family members. Enough is enough. As we approach the warmer summer months, I look forward to joining the efforts of Governor Quinn and Mayor Daley to come up with a plan for safer communities.

Crime decreases property values, discourages people from establishing businesses and hurts existing businesses, breeding violence. We recognize the need for greater educational and job opportunities, especially for workers in construction, road building, and other trades. I authored legislation which was signed into law that creates a microloan program for those who were formerly incarcerated to start their own businesses. I ask others to join me to pass additional legislation that I wrote that will attempt to increase the chance that formerly incarcerated will have a chance to be interviewed for jobs, and a plan to reduce the unemployment rate in these affected areas through the African-American Employment Plan Act. We must work for these changes in society at the same time we work to decrease the crime and violence.

We have heard from many, many people who want a different strategy in dealing with crime. They would welcome a National Guard presence that is respectful and would work with the community to increase safety in our most violence-prone neighborhoods.

We are not talking about tanks in the streets, bayonets fixed, or M-16s on every corner. The National Guard has worked in similar roles in communities throughout the world, and this would be no different. The Illinois National Guard is already committed to improving our communities, including the hosting of YOUTH EXPO in June at the Armory on the South Side. We are asking for the Guard to help at another level, as an auxiliary to the Chicago Police Department.

The Chicago Police Department is working hard, but the Mayor and the Police Superintendent have said that help is needed. We think that deploying the Guard is a good option that should be used to save lives. If there are other options that can be shown to achieve the same goal, we should look closely at those options. But, for the sake of the Williams family and hundreds of families throughout Chicago, we do not have the option of doing nothing. As the father to a beautiful six year old daughter, an uncle to elementary school nephews and nieces, and as a son to a senior citizen mom who has worked all of her life, all living in Austin, I am pleading for help for our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "LKF".

La Shawn K. Ford  
State Representative – Eighth District