ELECT A NURSE NOV. 3RD

CELESTE WILLIAMS

ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT FOR UNITED STATES CONGRESS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY OF GEORGE FLOYD - A CALL TO ACTION

Bella Vista, AR — JUNE 4, 2020
America has observed her cities and people wrestle with the consequences of police brutality and institutionalized racism, and District 3 is not exempt. Over the last few days we've seen protests demanding social justice for people of color in Fort Smith, Russellville, Bentonville, and Fayetteville, among others. The Governor has declared a State of Emergency in response to the ongoing unrest.

Our nation mourns George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony Dade, and the countless more Black lives lost to police violence and racially motivated murders. Emboldened by righteous anger and heavy grief, protesters have inspired calls to action from coast to coast, and some have been met with intense opposition from law enforcement in somber scenes, while some have been joined by local police in solidarity.

"*The murder of George Floyd is the latest in an all too familiar pattern of violence. Unarmed Black Americans are being killed at an alarming rate and under even more alarming circumstances - while jogging, at traffic stops, and in the comfort of their own homes*," said Congressional Candidate Celeste Williams. "*I stand in unequivocal solidarity with the Black community and family of George Floyd as they endure this heartache, and with the protesters as they demand justice.*"

"*What's more, this crisis doesn't take us by surprise*," Williams reminds us. "*Congressional inaction, however, is inexcusable, particularly from members of my own party*."

Among the NAACP's 68 legislative priorities in the 116th Congress, only 13 have earned a vote in the House of Representatives. Steve Womack voted against all 13, refusing to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act or to strengthen the Voting Rights Act.

"*As your next Congresswoman, I will fight to reform our criminal justice system and the social and economic inequities that marginalize people, said Williams. "Steve Womack has shirked this responsibility at every turn. We have to fix our court system which criminalizes poverty and end the militarization of our local police. I want to restore the dignity of work by increasing the federal minimum wage and ensuring all workers have paid sick leave. We need to make it easier, not harder, for every eligible voter to safely cast their ballot. My opponent has had 10 years to work on these issues, and he's done nothing to help."*

Williams continued, *"Our President has called for the military to be deployed against citizens and ordered that peaceful protesters be tear gassed and shot with rubber bullets so he could pose for an awkward photo op. Our Senator Tom Cotton also called for the military to quell protesters.* ***Womack has remained silent through it all, and his silence is deafening. It's time for new leadership in Washington. The people deserve a Representative who cares and will do the work."***

Steve Womack has shown his true colors before, defending President Trump's widely-denounced remarks about immigrants from "s***hole countries" with a racist quip of his own, calling Haiti and African nations "depraved." His silence over the weekend on the murder of George Floyd reminds us where his priorities lie - outside of the needs of the American people.

"*Racism is non-partisan and pervasive in America*," said Williams. "*This is bigger than party. Both sides of the aisle are complicit in perpetuating systemic racism. My family's dinner-table conversations have sounded very different this week. I hope yours have, too.* ***Black voices deserve to be heard always, though especially in times such as these. I am listening.***"

FAST FACTS - INEQUITY IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

FACT: Since Jan. 1, 2015, 1,252 black people have been shot and killed by police, not including those who died in police custody or were killed using other methods. (source)

FACT: Although Black Americans account for less than 13 percent of the U.S. population, they are killed by police at more than twice the rate of white Americans. (source)

FACT: 99 percent of killings by police from 2013-2019 have not resulted in officers being charged with a crime. (source)

FACT: Restrictive use of force policies are associated with fewer police killings. (source)

FACT: Three out of 5 people in U.S. jails today have not been convicted of a crime. This amounts to nearly half a million people sitting in jails each day, despite the fact that they are legally innocent of the crime with which they have been charged. (source)

FACT: In effect, the cash bail system criminalizes poverty, as people who are unable to afford bail are detained while they await trial for weeks or even months. Cash bail perpetuates inequities in the justice system that are disproportionately felt by communities of color and those experiencing poverty. (source)

FACT: The National Defense Authorization Act sponsors a program that transfers military-grade weaponry to local police departments. (source)
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