



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Senator Stewart-Cousins Asks Fellow Legislators to Answer Dr. King's Persistent Question, "What Can You Do For Others ?"

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS January 22, 2016



Albany, NY - Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the Senate Democratic Leader, spoke Thursday on a Senate Resolution she introduces annually in honor of civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and urged her fellow legislators this session to consider answering Dr. King's most persistent question, "What can you do for others ?" The celebration of Dr. King's birthday coincides with the start of a new legislative session, when the State Senate begins its most important work, reviewing the Governor's Budget Proposal.

Senator Stewart-Cousins, a strong advocate for equal rights and opportunities, equal justice and service to others, urged her fellow legislators to consider Dr. King's challenge as a civil rights leader, a challenge that she says resonates even today. "We are all in the position everyday to do something for others," Senator Stewart-Cousins said to her fellow legislators on the State Senate floor.

"But few of us are in these kinds of positions that when we act, we are doing for others. What will we do ? What will we do in reforming criminal justice ? What will be do in education ? What will we do in economic justice ? What will we do to make sure that equality is the key to America's continued progress right here in this state ?"

Senator Stewart-Cousins' top priority is making New York a better, more affordable place to live, work and raise a family. To do that, the Senator believes New York must continue to grow the economy, raise the minimum wage and pass paid family leave, lower taxes and reduce unfunded mandates, improve the quality of education New York students have access to, and ensure that government protects the rights and health of all state residents. Governor Cuomo declared his support for many of the Senate Democratic Conference's priorities in his 2016 State of the State Address. Senator Stewart-Cousins is pleased that so many mutual goals are shared including the Senate Democrats' ethics and economic initiatives.

The Senate Democratic Conference led by Senator Stewart-Cousins has introduced bills to reform the state's criminal justice system and to raise the age of criminal responsibility. The Senate Democrats also support raising the state's minimum wage to lift more than 1.1 million New Yorkers out of poverty, and to pass paid family leave so that families can take time to care for sick loved ones without losing their job.

The Senator's Full Remarks:

Thank you Mr. President. I rise as we do annually to give honor to a man who has not only changed the course of everyday lives of individuals but the understanding of peace and equality and service and justice in our world. I often talk about my parents who had no thought of me one day ever being in a position such as this because of the world they lived in as African-Americans. But the reality is that we are at this point where Dr. King's message has to be more resonant within each of us in the work that we do today than ever before. There's a lot of opinions; there's a lot of conversation, and we in this chamber have the ability to lead in ways that would make Dr. King proud.

One of his quotes that I remember is, "Life's persistent question is, what can you do others?". We are all in the position everyday to do something for others. But few of us are in these kinds of positions that when we act, we are doing for others. What will we do? What will we do in reforming criminal justice? What will we do in education? What will we do in economic justice? What will we do to make sure that equality is the key to America's continued progress right here in this state. That's the persistent question, and fortunately for us in this chamber, we can offer the answer. I hope that next year when we celebrate Dr. King's birthday, we will have spent our days leading up to it answering - in the way Dr. King would have us answer - life's most persistent question. Thank you.

Hear her remarks: <https://youtu.be/hiX227ggT6Q>