

Washington, D.C. - Congressman David Price (D-NC) delivered the following remarks today at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Rally in Durham.

Today I want to direct our attention to what Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us about "power and love." I speak to you unapologetically as a politician about politics. I am among many elected officials here today aware that we are accountable to the communities that elect us. And this is a year when those communities will be engaged in elections, making decisions critical to our common future.

I take my text from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s last presidential address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1967:

Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. And one of the great problems of history is that the concepts of love and power have usually been contrasted as opposites—polar opposites—so that love is identified with a resignation of power, and power with a denial of love. We've got to get this thing right. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love. It is precisely this collision of immoral power with powerless morality which constitutes the major crisis of our time.

This is a powerful and pertinent message in this election year. Our challenge is to construct a strong and reliable connection between power and leadership on the one hand and our deepest values, "love implementing the demands of justice," on the other.

We have had too much of "reckless and abusive," indifferent and unaccountable power in our country. We cannot simply relegate love, justice, our deepest values to the realms of advocacy and protest, as important as advocacy and protest can be. We must link-up love and power.

People of conscience need to get practical, yes political, and put our shoulders to the wheel. The realms of power need to be made responsive and accountable. That is what politics and elections should be about in a democracy. It is what Martin Luther King Jr. stood for. Today is

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the day to clarify our understanding and steady our resolve for the challenges that lie before us.

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