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Acting Governor Kim Guadagno Celebrates Black History Month with Visits to Two New Jersey Schools

Thursday, February 14, 2013

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Presents Banners in Recognition of 150th Anniversary of Emancipation Proclamation and 50th Anniversary of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream Speech" to Gregory Elementary School and Martin Luther King Elementary School

TRENTON – Recognizing the contributions of African Americans to the nation's culture and history, Acting Governor Kim Guadagno today spoke to students at Long Branch's Gregory School on the significance and meaning of Black History Month. During her visit, the Acting Governor also presented the school with two banners from The King Center in Atlanta, Georgia. The banners, which celebrate the anniversary of the Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday and Dr. King's birthday, were presented to the school in recognition of the 150th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 50th Anniversary of Dr. King's "I Have a Dream Speech." The Acting Governor will also present a set of banners during her visit to Martin Luther King Elementary School in Edison tomorrow.

"This year, Black History Month is especially significant because it marks the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington where Dr. King delivered the inspiring 'I Have a Dream' speech," said Acting Governor Kim Guadagno. "As citizens of New Jersey, we should feel tremendous pride that our state has been a leader in recognizing and honoring the lasting impact of Dr. King on our nation."

New Jersey was the first state to officially recognize the significance of Dr. King's life and legacy when Governor Tom Kean established the nation's first Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission in 1983.

"It was inspiring to see the State's first Lt. Governor speak to the students at the Gregory School today," said Bridgette Burt, principal of Long Branch's Gregory School. "She motivated our young leaders and let them know they could achieve anything they put their minds to. I felt that she connected with me and our students as we all embrace the diversity around us and learn from each other. Being unique and determined are two qualities that we promote at the Gregory School each and every day."

Also in observance of Black History Month, the Acting Governor is hosting an exhibit of educational materials and photographs of prominent African-Americans in the rotunda of the Department of State in the State House. On display through February, the items are on loan from Department of State employee Kathy Daniels. The exhibit includes reproductions of *The North Star*, a newspaper published by escaped slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, a reproduction of the thirteenth amendment, which made slavery illegal in the United States, and profiles of several abolitionists, including Robert Pervis, Henry Adams, John Brown, James Armistead, Dred Scott and Richard H. Cain.

"Lt. Governor Guadagno recognized MLK School as a microcosm of our highly diverse state - an authentic, vibrant, and true community of diverse learners," said Diane Wilton, principal of Edison's Martin Luther King Elementary School. "The Lt. Governor's presence among the students, teachers, and esteemed guests emphasized the value placed on education by the current administration. A true honor in having the Lt. Governor, the entire learning community accepted gifts of art work from the State of New Jersey that will be displayed throughout the school so that all learners may be reminded of the essential contributions of historical figures of Black Americans."

In commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, a copy of the document was recently acquired and is now on display in the State House. In addition, the 2013 Marion Thompson Wright Conference will explore the ways in which Emancipation immediately impacted enslaved African Americans and how the enslaved worked to free themselves. Cosponsored by the Department of State's New Jersey Historical Commission, the day-long conference features several award-winning historians, including James Oakes, CUNY Graduate Center; Thavolia Glymph, Duke University; Steven Hahn, University of Pennsylvania; and Tera Hunter, Princeton University. The year's conference will take place Saturday, February 16, 2013 at Rutgers University Newark.

A photo of the banners presented by the Acting Governor is attached to the release.

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