**Remarks by Pat Vredevoogd Combs
2007 President, National Association of REALTORS**

 **Washington, D.C. Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial Presentation**

 **U.S. Capitol**

**February 27, 2007**

**Washington, D.C.**

*What happens to a dream deferred?*

*Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore-
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over-
Like a syrupy sweet?*

*Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.*

*Or does it explode?*

African-American poet Langston Hughes penned these words in 1951 - just a few years before Martin Luther King Jr. would become Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and more than a decade before America and the world would hear the words "I have a dream" echo eight momentous times from the Lincoln Memorial, over a sea of protestors, through the U.S. Capitol building and into communities across America.

That day - August 28, 1963 - the dream of freedom and equality for Americans of all races, all creeds and all colors, which had been deferred for centuries, exploded.  In the years that followed, Dr. King and all those who joined in the long fight for civil rights reshaped the fabric of this great nation.

All who stand here today are heirs to his great legacy.

The National Association of REALTORS® is proud to be a part of the effort to build a permanent home for Dr. King on our national mall, as a sponsor of the Washington D.C. Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial.

This structure, which will be completed in 2008, will serve as enduring proof of how one man changed our nation's history - through powerful words and peaceful acts of defiance.  And it will be an ever-present reminder to each of us that we must work together to ensure that no American will ever again see a dream deferred due to prejudice, fear or hate.

In the words of Dr. King:  Our destiny truly is tied together...We cannot walk alone.

For REALTORS® across the nation, Dr. King's legacy is an inspiration to work even harder - in our communities, at all levels of government and in our businesses - to put the dream of homeownership within reach for more people of all backgrounds and social standings.

We must continue to strengthen America's fair housing laws.

We must improve access to affordable housing in every community we serve.

And we must increase diversity in the real estate market.

The time to act is now - not tomorrow, or next year, but today.

As Dr. King said:  We cannot overlook the urgency of the moment. We must make the pledge that we will march ahead.

Back on August 28, 1963, Dr. King told the crowd of 250,000 protestors that they had come to Washington to cash a check on a promissory note.  That promissory note was written in the U.S. Constitution and backed by the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation.  It said that all are free and deserve the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

In the words of Dr. King:  We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity in this nation.

On behalf of the more than 1.3 million REALTORS®, who are free to pursue their dreams without deference, and who work everyday to bring those opportunities to others, I am honored to present a check for $1 million to Harry E. Johnson, Sr., president and CEO of the Washington, D.C. Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation.

Marian Wright Edelman has said:  "If you don't like the way the world is, you change it. You have an obligation to change it. You just do it one step at a time."

Dr. King paved the way for all of us to change the world.

I hope this day will inspire all of us to take many more steps together toward shaping a better America - the land of the free, and a happy home for ALL.

Thank you!