

HONORING THE LIFE AND WORK OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

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(House
of Representatives - January 13, 2010)

Madam Speaker, I rise today in full support of honoring and continuing to recognize Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday as a national holiday.

Dr. King's birthday was first recognized in the great state of Illinois in 1973, 5 years after being introduced to Congress by my good friend John Conyers. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a very prominent African-American clergyman and political leader of the twentieth century; the most prominent member of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, during that time he became famous through his promotion of nonviolent methods of opposition to segregation, such as boycotts of segregated city buses, or sit-ins at lunch counters that would not serve Black people, and organized marches that will forever be remembered in our nation's history. One such demonstration was the march at Marquette Park, in Chicago, IL, where Dr. King was struck in the head by a rock for protesting the open housing laws in the city. When asked why he put himself at risk he said "I have to do this--to expose myself--to bring this hate into the open." The marches led to an accord that year between the protesters and the Chicago Real Estate Board, which helped start the cultural change in Chicago. Dr. King's most memorable march was the March on Washington in 1963 where he delivered his "I Have A Dream" speech; it was a speech of hope and determination, epitomizing the day's message of racial harmony, love, and a belief that Blacks and Whites could live together in peace. Even after his death, he has evolved from a prominent civil rights leader into the symbol for the civil rights movement in the United States. He is studied by schoolchildren of all backgrounds; monuments have been dedicated in his honor and institutions such as the Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta which bears his name, have been established to carry on his work. The message of racial harmony and equality for all is a message I still believe in and fight for everyday, so it is an honor to support this resolution honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., his life and legacy.