Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Speech
Resources: Fact Sheet

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Introduction

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is a federal holiday observed annually on the third Monday in January. It celebrates the life and legacy of the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. in honor of his birthday and achievements. The day is also referred to as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday; MLK Day; Martin Luther King Day; the King Holiday; and the King Day of Service. In 2016, this holiday is celebrated on January 18, and it marks the 30th anniversary of the first observance of King’s birthday as a federal holiday.

This guide assists congressional offices with work related to Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. It contains links to legislation, CRS reports, sample speeches and remarks from the Congressional Record, and presidential proclamations and remarks. It also contains links to additional government web resources and selected educational, cultural, and advocacy organizations.

History

On November 2, 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed legislation making the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a legal public holiday to be observed on the third Monday of every January (P.L. 98-144). When President Bill Clinton signed the King Holiday and Service Act on August 23, 1994 (P.L. 103-304), the holiday was designated as a day of community service, interracial cooperation, and youth anti-violence initiatives.

President Ronald Reagan delivered the remarks “Message on the Observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day” on January 14, 1986, and issued Proclamation 5431 on January 18, 1986, as part of the first recognition of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a federal holiday.

Legislation

P.L. 98-144— Authorized Dr. King’s birthday to be a legal public holiday, on the third Monday in January (97 Stat. 917; November 2, 1983).

P.L. 103-304— Authorized appropriations to support the planning and performance of national service opportunities in conjunction with the legal holiday honoring the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. (108 Stat. 1565; August 23, 1994).

CRS Reports


CRS Report R43743, Monuments and Memorials Authorized and Completed Under the Commemorative Works Act in the District of Columbia, by Jacob R. Straus

Sample Speeches and Recognitions

Elected officials often deliver speeches, make floor statements, issue press releases, or enter Extensions of Remarks into the Congressional Record to recognize federal holidays and observances. The following are some recent examples:


**Presidential Proclamations and Remarks**

One of the many uses of a presidential proclamation is to ceremoniously honor a group or call attention to certain issues or events. Some recent Martin Luther King, Jr. Day proclamations, from the *Compilation of Presidential Documents*, include


**Government Resources**

Architect of the Capitol’s Bust of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Rotunda

The Corporation for National and Community Service, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial

**Educational, Cultural, and Advocacy Organizations**

The King Center—The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change (“The King Center”) was established in 1968 by Mrs. Coretta Scott King in Atlanta, GA. An online digital archive houses the works and papers of Dr. King.

Morehouse College King Collection—Provides information about Morehouse College’s collection of the personal books and papers of Dr. King. The Office of the Morehouse College King Collection establishes programming and community outreach initiatives that highlight the teachings and philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute (Stanford University)—A collection of facts, resources, primary documents, multimedia, and recommended readings.
Nobel Prizes and Laureates—Martin Luther King, Jr.—Biographical information and selected readings.

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