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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 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 2022, this holiday is celebrated on January 17.

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 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 and amended existing statutes 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).

Related CRS Reports

CRS Report R41990, *Federal Holidays: Evolution and Current Practices*, by Jacob R. Straus

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:

Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, "Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr," remarks in the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 168, no.8 (January 12, 2022), p. H75.

Senator Tim Scott, "Senator Scott Statement Celebrating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day," (January 18, 2021). Retrieved from the official website of Senator Scott.

Representative Stacey Plaskett, "Congresswoman Stacey E. Plaskett Releases Statement in Honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day," (January 17, 2021). Retrieved from the official website of Representative Plaskett.

Senator Ben Cardin, "Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day," remarks in the Senate, *Congressional Record*, vol. 166, no. 10 (January 16, 2020), S271-S272.

Representative Brenda Lawrence, "Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," remarks in the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 166, no. 10 (January 16, 2020), p. H304.

Representative Jim Costa, "Commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. Day," remarks in the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 166, no. 9 (January 15, 2020), p. H245.

Representative Antonio Delgado, "Honoring Martin Luther King Jr. Day," remarks in the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 166, no. 9 (January 15, 2020), p. H252.

Representative Glenn Thompson, "Commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. Day," remarks in the House of Representatives, *Congressional Record*, vol. 165, no. 7 (January 14, 2019), p. H535.

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 include

Presidential Proclamations, *Compilation of Presidential Documents*—Joseph R. Biden (2022)

Presidential Proclamations, *Compilation of Presidential Documents*—Donald J. Trump (2018-2021)

Presidential Proclamations, *Compilation of Presidential Documents*—Barack H. Obama (2010-2017)

Presidential Proclamations, *Compilation of Presidential Documents*—George W. Bush (2002-2009)

Presidential Proclamations, *Compilation of Presidential Documents*—William J. Clinton (1994-2001)

Presidential Proclamations, *Compilation of Presidential Documents*—George H. W. Bush (1993)

Presidential proclamations and remarks from 1993 to the present are available through the govinfo service on the Government Publishing Office website. Earlier remarks (including selected audio and video clips) are available through The American Presidency Project, established by the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Government Resources

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

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

The National Archives of New York City, Martin Luther King, Jr.

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

A Man to Remember: Commemorating Martin Luther King, Jr. (Teaching with the Library of Congress, January 10, 2017), Dr. King Remembered (Folklife Today, January 16, 2017), and Music for MLK Day (In the Muse, January 18, 2020)—Library of Congress blog posts that provide information about the Library of Congress's collections and teaching resources on the civil rights era and Dr. King, and links to related Library of Congress blog posts and online exhibits.

Prints and Photographs Online Catalog—Prints and photos of or related to Dr. King in the collection of the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

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. The website provides access to the digital archive that houses the works and papers of Dr. King.

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

Spotlight: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—A collection of archival materials from the Smithsonian Museums that document Dr. King's life and work.

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

Martin Luther King, Jr.—Biographical information and selected readings from the official website of the Nobel Prize.

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