

RECOGNIZING THE EFFORTS OF THOSE WHO SERVE THEIR COMMUNITIES ON MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

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(House of Representatives - January 13, 2009)

Statement of Representative Danny K. Davis

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me first of all thank my good friend and chairman of our subcommittee. As a matter of fact, I am already beginning to feel disappointed and underprivileged because I will not have the opportunity to serve with him this year as a result of leaving the Education Committee. But I want to thank him for yielding time, and I want to thank him for his tremendous leadership.

Mr. Speaker, next Tuesday will usher in a new era of hope, a new chapter in the history of America, when President-elect Obama takes office. This historic moment brings renewed energy to Dr. King's mission and memory. We must not forget that we have reached this place in history partly because of Dr. King's remarkable life. Today I would like to honor his memory and those who work tirelessly for his cause.

Frederick Douglass once said, "A battle lost or won is easily described, understood, and appreciated, but the moral growth of a great nation requires reflection, as well as observation, to appreciate it." Today, we do just that. Today we reflect on one life that changed the course of so many others. We reflect on the commitment and integrity of a man who stood up to those who said he was nothing. We reflect on a man who had his priorities in line, who knew what was important and never forgot it. And we reflect so that we can learn what we must do as a nation to realize Dr. King's dream.

Born January 15, 1929, Dr. King grew up to be a man who would change American history by fighting for fairness, dignity and equality for all under the law and through the eyes of his fellow citizens. But his journey was never easy. Martin Luther King attended Georgia's segregated public schools. Like so many others, Dr. King was told by society that he was a lesser being and that he could never be as good, as human, as his peers.

But his journey was never easy. Despite the hardships, the bombings, the fire hoses, the dogs, the relentless beatings and the death of those devoted to his cause, Dr. King was able to rally his followers to rise to the occasion by his purpose-driven actions and unforgettable rhetoric.

In the great example of Dr. King's influence, 250,000 men and women, white and black, gathered for the famous march on Washington. It was there that Dr. King delivered his "I have a Dream" speech to the Nation.

Dr. King's legacy reminds us that there are some things we must continue to fight for. And although the rocky road that Dr. King traveled is somewhat smoother today, this Nation must continue to promote equal opportunity and fairness for all Americans. As we face today's many challenges, we remember that Dr. King's hope for a better tomorrow is very much alive.

So I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in this discussion, and again I want to thank my friend and colleague from the great State of Texas, Mr. HINOJOSA for giving me the opportunity.