

LA

Talking Points for Honorable Cardiss Collins  
on King Holiday Bill - Press Conference  
with Congressmen Garcia and Beard

Reasons for designating Martin Luther King's birthday as a legal national holiday:

Dr. King was the leading advocate of justice, equality, and civil rights in this century. He forced Americans to face the bigotry and inequities in this society.

He was a unique leader who aroused the national conscience and changed the whole fabric of society through the civil rights movement. Dr. King believed in the American ideals of freedom and equality and worked diligently to erase discrimination and poverty in this country. He stressed the dignity and importance of all people regardless of race, color, or creed.

The holiday honoring Dr. King would be a tribute to a great American and a great leader of people. It would be a day serving to remind Americans of his life and legacy, and the ideals that he stood for.

Legislative action on King holiday bill:

The bill was pulled from the floor on December 5, 1979 because an amendment had been attached authorizing King's birthday to be commemorated on a Sunday. This amendment was unacceptable to the Black Caucus and other supporters of the bill. There are hundreds of commemorative days most of which are frivolous.

Vote on Beard Sunday amendment: 207 - 191

Vote on McClory Monday amendment: 291 - 196

Vote on suspension passage: 252 - 133 (Nov. 13, 1979)

Black Caucus views on Columbus Day and Washington's birthday holidays:

Martin Luther King was a great American whose contribution to this nation was on par with that of Washington and Columbus. He changed the course of history through his civil rights doctrines and opposition to segregation and discrimination in this society. The progress of minorities in this country today is directly attributable to his assault upon institutional racism. In short, he has forced Americans to live up to the ideals of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Dr. King deserves the honor of a legal national holiday, not the obscurity of a commemorative day.

Costs of the King holiday to the private sector and taxpayers:

Cost to the taxpayers and to private industry is not an issue. The economic costs of making Dr. King's birthday are outweighed by the symbolic and real gains. It is a moral decision; honoring Dr. King will indicate to the world that we respect this great civil rights leader.

Beard argues:

\$ 3.8 billion cost to private sector

\$212.0 million cost to federal government

\$579.0 million cost to state and local governments

However, this nation's economic problems are not caused by national holidays. No one has proposed abolishing the nine existing holidays. The president just declared December 24 an additional holiday for federal workers and there was no great outcry against that.