

REMARKS OF HON. GEO. W. CROCKETT, JR.

under Special Order on
Birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

January 21, 1986

Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, I am honored today to join with my colleagues in marking the first national celebration of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of America's most courageous fighters for civil rights for all Americans.

I want to also publicly thank my colleague John Conyers, whose leadership and inspiration kept this legislation alive before Congress until the majority of our colleagues finally saw the light and ratified it two years ago. Although he is receiving far less than his share of credit for this observance, John Conyers deserves our thanks and praise for his efforts to make the King Birthday a national event.

It is altogether fitting that this body honors Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, since his cause was our cause -- the protection and strengthening of national commitment to justice and equality for all our citizens.

If we in this body are to add meaning to the national tribute to Dr. King, however, we must reflect in our legislative actions his full range of concerns, his caring and his love for his fellow man. We must continue his effort to bring out the best in America, and to eliminate the hunger, poverty, violence and racism here at home and throughout the world community.

The best in America fights for the well-being of all its citizens, assuring food for the hungry, shelter for the homeless, and employment for the willing and able; the best in America upholds those human and civil rights for which Dr. King fought, and strongly defends

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against any encroachment or return to the assorted bigotries of the past.

The best in America calls upon us to lead the effort to end the madness of the nuclear arms race; to be an agent for peace and stability in Central America; to speak out unequivocally for a meaningful dialogue among all sides in the search for peace in the Middle East, and to make clear that no one is really free in this world so long as 23 million Black South Africans are denied the right to govern their lives.

The many honors marking the first Federal holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. have rightly emphasized the urgency of continuing to make his dream a reality. To achieve this we can, and indeed we must, be the catalyst for continuing to achieve the very best in ourselves and our society.