

HOUSE RESOLUTION 3

By Lamberth

A RESOLUTION to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHEREAS, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was born January 15, 1929, and attended segregated public schools in Georgia before enrolling in Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, at the age of fifteen; and

WHEREAS, in February of 1948, Dr. King was ordained in the Christian ministry at the age of nineteen at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, and became Assistant Pastor of that church; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1948 from Morehouse College, a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1951 from Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in theology in 1955 from Boston University; and

WHEREAS, during his time in Boston, Dr. King met Coretta Scott and the two were married on June 18, 1953; the couple would later have two sons and two daughters; and

WHEREAS, in 1954, Dr. King accepted the call of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, and was pastor there from September 1954 to November 1959, when he resigned to move back to Atlanta to lead the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King led the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott for 381 days to protest the arrest of Mrs. Rosa Parks and the segregation of the bus system in Montgomery, during which time Dr. King was arrested and his home was bombed; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King responded to the arrests and violence with nonviolence and courage in the face of hatred; the Montgomery bus boycott was the first great nonviolent civil rights demonstration in the United States in modern times; and

WHEREAS, on December 13, 1956, the United States Supreme Court declared laws requiring segregation on buses to be unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, between 1957 and 1968, Dr. King traveled more than 6,000,000 miles, spoke more than 2,500 times, and wrote five books and numerous articles supporting efforts around the country to end injustice and bring about social change and desegregation; and

WHEREAS, serving alongside his father as co-pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church from 1960 until his death in 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led the March on Washington, D.C., the largest rally of the civil rights movement, on August 28, 1963; and

WHEREAS, on that day, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and before a crowd of more than 200,000 people, Dr. King delivered his famous "I Have A Dream" speech, one of the classic orations in American history during which he said: "I have a dream that my ... children will live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character"; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was a champion of nonviolence and fervently advocated nonviolent resistance as the strategy to end segregation and racial discrimination in America; in 1964, at the age of thirty-five, he became the youngest man to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his efforts; and

WHEREAS, through his work and reliance on nonviolent protest, Dr. King was instrumental in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

WHEREAS, on the evening of April 4, 1968, Dr. King was assassinated while standing on the balcony of his room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead sanitation workers in protest against low wages and intolerable working conditions; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King was the leading civil rights advocate of his time, spearheading the civil rights movement in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s and earning world-wide recognition as an eloquent and articulate spokesperson for equality; and

WHEREAS, in the face of hatred and violence, Dr. King preached a doctrine of nonviolence and civil disobedience to combat segregation, discrimination, and racial injustice, and he believed that people have the moral capacity to care for other people; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King dedicated his life to securing the fundamental principles of liberty and justice for all United States citizens; and

WHEREAS, in 1968, legislation was first filed in Congress by Representative John Conyers to establish the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., as a federal holiday; and

WHEREAS, in 1983, Congress passed and President Ronald Reagan signed legislation officially designating the third Monday in January as Martin Luther King, Jr., Day, a federal holiday which is now observed as a special day in all fifty states and in more than 100 countries; and

WHEREAS, since its first official observance in 1986, Martin Luther King, Jr., Day in Tennessee has been celebrated as a day to remember the message of Dr. King and inspire those alive today to dedicate themselves to his goal of a free and just United States for every citizen; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King will forever be tied to the State of Tennessee. His emphasis on peaceful demonstration inspired young men and women across the country to draw attention to the injustices done solely because of the color of a person's skin. Half a century after his life was tragically cut short in Memphis, it is incumbent upon each of us to continue Dr. King's legacy by working to build a just society that respects all human life, regardless of race, religion, or creed; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor and celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and give thanks for his many contributions to American society. We join with Tennesseans throughout this great state to continue the fight against racism of all types as we all work to bring Dr. King's dream to fruition by making Tennessee a place where equality, justice, freedom, and peace continue to grow and flourish.