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SCR-48 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: 55th anniversary of assassination. (2023-2024)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 48

CHAPTER 87

Relative to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 06, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 48, Smallwood-Cuevas. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: 55th anniversary of assassination.

This measure would recognize Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 2023, the 55th anniversary of his assassination, for his numerous accomplishments and contributions to the nation and the long-lasting influence that his words and legacy continue to have globally.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated 55 years ago in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968; and

WHEREAS, His sacrifice continues to reverberate throughout the nation in large and small ways, and our nation is still trying to recover from Dr. King's death, to seize opportunities for racial equality, economic justice, and peace, and to create what Dr. King referred to as a "beloved community," which seemed to recede in the aftermath of his death; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Baptist minister and founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), who had led the civil rights movement since the mid-1950s, using a combination of impassioned speeches and nonviolent protests to fight segregation and achieve significant civil rights advances for African Americans; and

WHEREAS, His sacrifice led to an outpouring of anger among Black Americans, as well as a period of national mourning that helped speed the way for an equal housing bill that would be the last significant legislative achievement of the civil rights era; and

WHEREAS, In the last years of his life, Dr. King sought to widen his appeal beyond his own race, speaking out publicly against the Vietnam War and working to form a coalition of poor Americans—Black and White alike—to address such issues as poverty and unemployment; and

WHEREAS, In the spring of 1968, while preparing for a planned march to Washington to lobby Congress on behalf of the poor, Dr. King was called to Memphis, Tennessee, to support a sanitation workers' strike and on the night of April 3, Dr. King gave a speech at the Mason Temple Church in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, In his speech, Dr. King seemed to foreshadow his own untimely passing, or at least to strike a particularly reflective note, ending with these now-historic words: "And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And so I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."; and

WHEREAS, Just after 6 p.m. the following day, Dr. King was standing on the second-floor balcony of the Lorraine Motel, where he and his associates were staying, when a sniper's bullet struck him in the neck. He was rushed to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead about an hour later, at the age of 39; and

WHEREAS, Shock and distress over the news of Dr. King's death sparked rioting in more than 100 cities around the country, including burning and looting, and amid a wave of national mourning, President Lyndon B. Johnson urged Americans to "reject the blind violence" that had killed Dr. King, whom he called the "apostle of nonviolence"; and

WHEREAS, He also called on the United States Congress to speedily pass the civil rights legislation then entering the House of Representatives for debate, calling it a fitting legacy of Dr. King and his life's work, and on April 11, President Johnson signed the Fair Housing Act, a major piece of civil rights legislation; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King has remained the most widely known African American leader of his era, and the most public face of the civil rights movement, along with its most eloquent voice; and

WHEREAS, A campaign to establish a national holiday in Dr. King's honor began almost immediately after his death, to honor his life and accomplishment; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby further recognizes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 2023, the 55th anniversary of his assassination, for his numerous accomplishments and contributions to our nation and the long-lasting influence that his words and legacy continues to have globally; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.