

H. Res. 352

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

September 16, 2003.

Whereas the first call for a march on Washington was initiated in 1941 by A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, in response to the blatant discrimination that had become a constant hardship in the lives of African-American workers;

Whereas in the spring and summer of 1963, more than 20,000 United States citizens were arrested and detained while nonviolently protesting the racial injustice that was widespread throughout the southern United States at that time;

Whereas Randolph told President Kennedy that the African-American population was going to march peacefully on Washington to demand their full and equal constitutional rights in the face of severe civil rights violations and harsh economic inequality;

Whereas in June of 1963 the “Big Six” civil rights leaders—Martin Luther King, Jr., James Farmer, John Lewis, Whitney Young, Roy Wilkins, and A. Philip Randolph—convened to plan a mass protest that would begin at the Washington Monument and end in front of the Lincoln Memorial;

Whereas the march was initially termed the “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom”, and aimed to advance support for a new Federal jobs program and a higher minimum wage;

Whereas the Big Six expanded the focus of the march to include civil rights injustices due to the disturbing events that had occurred in the months prior to the march, such as police dogs attacking peaceful demonstrators in Birmingham, the assassination of Medgar Evers in Jackson, and the lack of congressional support for President Kennedy’s civil rights bill;

Whereas Government officials were concerned about the outbreak of violence, but many civil rights organizations held orientation meetings before the march that taught and stressed the intrinsic non-violent principles of the movement;

Whereas on August 28, 1963, people from throughout the country arrived in Washington by plane, bus, train, and foot to express the urgent need for forceful and immediate action on the issue of civil rights;

Whereas demonstrators pledged their commitment and continued participation in the struggle for civil rights;

Whereas March leaders met with President Kennedy and Members of Congress to discuss the importance and consequential impact of the pending civil rights bill that aimed to end discrimination of African-Americans in the work place, voting booth, educational facilities, and all other public domains;

Whereas the demonstrators peacefully marched through the streets of the capital and, at the Lincoln Memorial, heard empowering and inspiring words from the Big Six lead-

ers, as well as Walter Reuther, Rev. Eugene Blake Carson, Rabbi Joachim Prinz, Matthem Ahmann, and Floyd McKissick;

Whereas police officers had their days of leave cancelled, suburban forces were given special control training, and 15,000 paratroopers were put on alert, but no Marchers were arrested or jailed and the march dispersed without incident;

Whereas the March was one of the first events to be televised worldwide, and thus brought international attention to the social and economic plight of African-Americans;

Whereas 15 Senators and 60 Representatives attended the rally at the Lincoln Memorial and witnessed the commitment of the demonstrators to the struggle for domestic and universal human rights;

Whereas the March sparked the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965;

Whereas the public display of humanity exhibited by the March educated the public and helped to correct some of their misconceptions, and demonstrated the possibility that an entire country could be changed through non-violent protest; and

Whereas the 1963 March on Washington was the largest political demonstration in United States history and proved to the nation that prejudice and discrimination against African-Americans and other minorities could be successfully fought by a collective force committed to the principles of non-violence: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) honors the 1963 March on Washington as one of the largest political demonstrations in United States history;

(2) recognizes the monumental importance of the 1963 March on Washington in the on-going struggle for civil rights and equal rights for all Americans; and

(3) extends its gratitude to the organizers and participants of the 1963 March on Washington for their dedication and commitment to equality and justice.

Attest:

Clerk.