

SEPTEMBER 16, 2003 CONGRESS HONORS THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON OF AUGUST 28, 1963
WASHINGTON, D.C. - Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 352, a resolution honoring the March on Washington of August 28, 1963, a turning point in the long road to justice and equality. In the struggle for civil rights, the March will forever hold a place in American history, and in the eyes of the world, as a day that showed that individuals united can affect change and progress without violence.

On that hot August day forty years ago, thousands of people converged on our nation's capital to stand up for civil rights, workers' rights, voting rights, equality in education, and fair pay. They marched for equality with a unified message that they as African-Americans would no longer wait patiently for civil rights to be delivered and practiced in society, but that they were demanding that the federal government take bold steps to ensure that the Constitution's promise was delivered to all Americans; that they would no longer be second-class citizens.

The words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. continue to resonate today and to serve as an inspiration for his generation and future generations to create a society in which all are treated equally because we are all created equal. I want to especially commend the work of Congressman John Lewis, my friend and colleague, who spoke on that day and who continues to inspire others and to fight for justice everyday.

The resolve of the speakers, the sheer number of marchers, the strong commitment to nonviolence, and the intensity of the sentiment on that day created an energy that spread throughout the country in the coming months and years. It allowed all Americans to see the struggle for civil rights articulated in a manner that was uninterrupted by violence and chaos and was highlighted by peace and unity and strength.

The March gave life to a Movement that continues to manifest itself today. While the March was successful in helping to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the fight for justice and equality is far from over. Today we are fighting to hold on to our civil liberties as the Bush Administration works to chip away at our right to privacy, free speech, and freedom of religion. Immigrants, the people who bring diversity and strength to our nation, must fight to live free from harassment as the Administration advocates unfair and discriminatory policies against them. People of color continue to fight for the opportunity to get a good education and to be treated fairly by the criminal justice system while President Bush opposes affirmative action. Low-income working families fight for fair treatment under the tax code as Republican Congressional leaders continue to deny them the child tax credit. And many, including elderly adults, persons with disabilities, and people of color, continue to fight for the right to have their vote count while our nation's election system has yet to catch up and meet the needs of all of America's voters.

Today, we remember the people who were at the March on Washington forty years ago -

their perseverance, their commitment to justice and nonviolence, their courage, their hope, and their success.□ But we must do more than just remember; we must use their example to continue the struggle today until Dr. King's dream of equality truly comes to life for all who live in the United States.