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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

On the 46th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., it is appropriate to review the progress of this Nation in securing civil rights for all our citizens.

Many of the social and political changes Dr. King envisioned as a civil rights leader are now taken for granted. But progress is not counted by past success; we must continually renew our commitment to the cause of justice and equality.

Dr. King helped lead the way to passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I supported the original Act and its five-year extension in 1970. This law has helped to open our political processes to full citizen participation--and we must safeguard these gains through another five-year extension of the Act.

I have directed the Attorney General to forward to the Congress late this week draft legislation for such an extension. I believe the right to vote is the foundation of freedom and equality. It must be protected.

During his lifetime, Dr. King received the Nobel Peace Prize and numerous other awards. But shortly before his death seven years ago, he said he preferred to be remembered not for those honors, but for service to his fellow man.

Dr. King is remembered as he wished--and his memory continues to inspire hope for America. We must not let his work die--that will be our highest tribute of all.

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