

WASHINGTON, DC – On Sunday evening, Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD) celebrated the 77th Anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birth by attending the Ministers Alliance of Charles County's annual celebration. Today, Rep. Hoyer attended events in Calvert and St. Mary's Counties.

As America observes the birthday of one its bravest and most influential national heroes, Hoyer called on all generations to work together to fulfill the dreams of equality and civil rights that Dr. King spread across the country, but tragically did not live to see fully materialized.

"Dr. King led the fight to reform America's ideas of equality and civil rights – and to dispel the notion that the American dream was only limited to Americans of a certain color or background," Hoyer said. "Dr. King understood the right to vote was invaluable to every American citizen. Without it, individuals truly have no voice in our nation's government."

To honor Dr. King's legacy, Hoyer called on President Bush and Congress to join in supporting full election reform and protecting voting rights. "One of the landmark achievements of the Civil Rights Movement, led by Dr. King, was the Voting Rights Act of 1965," Hoyer said. "The Voting Rights Act was a major step forward in America's quest to live up to our ideals of equality and justice that are admired worldwide." Hoyer noted that certain parts of the VRA are scheduled to expire in 2007 and stressed that "it is critical to the legacy of Dr. King to reauthorize those provisions this year, so that no American's franchise is denied or impeded."

Hoyer said he believes Dr. King would be disappointed with the direction of the current policies in Washington. "Dr. King understood that our public policy should reflect a higher moral code. Instead, Republicans have embraced an economic plan that refuses to raise the minimum wage, cuts student loans and Medicaid funding, increases the debt, and gives tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans," he said.

"To keep faith with the promise and requirements of our constitution and to honor Dr. King on the 77th anniversary of his birth, Congress needs to take a new direction and help lift up all Americans," Hoyer concluded.

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