

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny Hoyer (MD) released the following statement today honoring the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 being signed into law:

“Just last week, we marked the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. That day will forever be etched in our national memory. What some may overlook, however, is that just a week after his death, this nation chose to continue his work and honor his memory by signing the Civil Rights Act of 1968 into law. It was a constructive answer to a destructive act.

“The main provision of the law that President Lyndon Johnson signed 40 years ago today is known as the Fair Housing Act. This provision sought to raise millions of African-Americans out of the substandard housing that kept them confined to the ghetto and resulted in de facto segregation. In the America of the 60s, segregation was often the result of small acts of prejudice, rather than official discrimination. The Fair Housing Act outlawed that kind of discrimination, preventing landlords from shutting out tenants or refusing to sell property to a buyer on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin.

“Of course, it would only take you an hour in Washington, Baltimore, or any other big city to see how far away we still are. American segregation is still very real. Where it is the product of deliberate discrimination, the Fair Housing Act is still helping to stamp it out, helping tenants get the resources, advice, and legal representation to stand up for their rights. I'm proud that I've been working to strengthen fair housing laws, both on the federal level and in Maryland, since my very first days in elected office.

“The passage of the Civil Rights Act was a giant step forward on the path to equality, an even more remarkable feat considering the events one week prior. April 4 is a somber day in our history: the day Dr. King was taken from us. But April 11 is a hopeful day: the day we showed that the cause of civil rights for all - all too often halting and stumbling, but with a true aim - would go on without him.”

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Hoyer Statement on 40th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1968

April 10, 2008
