

DENVER CITY COUNCIL



Proclamation

Proclamation No. 25-2174

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Colorado Holiday Commission and Marade

WHEREAS, April 4, 1968, the day that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., worldwide humanitarian, was assassinated, spurred an unstoppable and unapologetic movement to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a holiday in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, the Colorado Black community, clergy, civil rights organizations, elected officials, freedom fighters, and people from all walks of life launched an effort forward for this great American to be so honored because of his ability to change our nation and the world; and

WHEREAS, this legal holiday and march would not only be an opportunity for remembrance but also an opportunity to protest and confront the historic and institutionalize racism, sexism and prejudice that persists and continue to persists in our institutions and our society an opportunity to continue Dr. King's legacy to fight for a more perfect union; and

WHEREAS, the path to accomplish a legal holiday in Colorado was championed by leaders in the Colorado General Assembly who over the years included: Colorado State Senator George W. Brown, Colorado State Representative Wellington E. Webb, Colorado State Representative King M. Trimble, Colorado State Representative Arie P. Taylor, and ultimately Colorado State Representative Wilma J. Webb; and

WHEREAS, in 1984, State Representative Wilma J. Webb successfully introduced and carried HB 1201 which was adopted by the Colorado 54th General Assembly on March 26. 1984, and was signed into law on April 4th, 1984, commemorating and observing the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; and

WHEREAS, the first Martin Luther King Jr. Colorado Holiday Commission was established with over 79 members appointed by Governor Richard D. Lamm. Representative Wilma J. Webb was appointed by Governor Lamm as the Commission's chairperson. Working very closely with Mrs. Coretta Scott King in planning for the Inaugural Holiday to take place in January 1986; and

WHEREAS, Representative Wilma Webb and the commission planned an inaugural celebration to be for six days leading up to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, which was to be celebrated on every third Monday of each year thereafter. In 1986, the first official celebration, was on Monday, January 20, 1986; and

WHEREAS, on Monday, January 20, 1986, an estimated crowd of 15,000 Coloradoans gathered at the Martin Luther King, Jr. sculpture in Denver City Park for the Martin Marade. The term Marade was coined by commission chairperson Representative Wilma Webb, whose meaning is to parade and celebrate the victories achieved in combating injustices that had occurred, and march non-violently to always confront injustices in the future wherever they may be; and

WHEREAS, after five years of commemorating the Dr. King holiday in Colorado, the Honorable Wilma J. Webb created the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Awards in conjunction with the Denver Symphony Orchestra and now the Colorado Symphony Orchestra; and

WHEREAS, people from of all walks of life to come together for an evening of culture and awards. On Tuesday, January 9th, 1991, the inaugural Humanitarian Awards were presented at Boettcher Concert Hall. For 35 years, this event has been free to all attendees. This year's event is on Tuesday, January 13, 7:30 p.m. at Boettcher Concert Hall; and

WHEREAS, as part of the inaugural Martin Luther King Jr. six-day celebration, The Greater Metropolitan Denver Ministerial Alliance and the faith-based community came together with a 350-member community choir that boasted standing-room-only at Boettcher Concert Hall, consisting of folks from all races, cultures, creeds, and economic backgrounds to commemorate the Dr. King Holiday. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Interfaith and Ecumenical Service, held on Sunday, January 18, 4 p.m. at Park Hill United Methodist Church.

WHEREAS, in 2006, the National Western Stock Show, Lu Vason, and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Colorado Holiday Commission collaborated to bring the Dr. Martin Luther King Black American Heritage Rodeo of Champions to the Denver Coliseum, with the inaugural event being Monday, January 16th, 2006. This year's MLK Jr. African American Heritage Rodeo is on Monday, January 19, 6 p.m. at the Denver Coliseum.

WHEREAS, the Marade has been held every year to the present, and is the largest march and parade in the country celebrating Dr. King, averaging 75,000 people every year, and

WHEREAS, pioneers and extraordinarily dedicated believers in Dr. King and the idea that all men and women are created equal, have worked fervently to assure that generations to come will have the benefit of the legacy of Dr. King; and

WHEREAS, this year will mark the 40th Marade on Monday, January 19th, 2026, starting at Denver City Park and ending at Colorado State Capitol.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE DENVER CITY COUNCIL:

Section 1. That the Denver City Council honors and celebrates the history and legacy of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Colorado Holiday Commission and Marade.

Section 2. That the Clerk and Recorder of the City and County of Denver shall affix the seal of the City and County of Denver to this proclamation and that a copy be transmitted to Dr. Vern L. Howard, Chairman of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission.

PASSED BY THE COUNCIL January 5, 2026

PRESIDENT

