



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE & SENATE
DEMOCRATS

For Immediate Release

January 17, 2022

Press Contacts:

Hannah Kurowski

Hannah.kurowski@oregonlegislature.gov

Oregon Democrats Honor Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Call on Congress to Change Filibuster to Pass Voting Rights

Democrats also reflect on the Legislature's policy-wins around racial and economic justice and look toward the future.

SALEM, Ore. —Today Oregon Democrats honor Martin Luther King Jr. Day by remembering his leadership as a civil rights leader and fierce advocate of racial and economic justice, voting rights, equitable housing, healthcare, fair labor laws, unions, guaranteed jobs and income.

In honor of his memory, Democrats call on Congress to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and the For the People Act.

“On this day we must remember how Martin Luther King, Jr. fought to eliminate the brutal tactics that deny the constitutional right to the ballot for Black and Brown voters,” said [Rep. Janelle Bynum](#) (D-Clackamas). “Congress must now honor his legacy by changing the filibuster and passing voting rights to preserve our democracy.”

“In his book, ‘Strength to Love,’ Dr. King said, ‘The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy,’” said House Majority Leader [Julie Fahey](#) (D-West Eugene and Junction City). “Right now we are in a moment of challenge and we need Congress to rise to the occasion.”

Currently, [19 states have passed 34 voting restriction laws](#) targeting predominantly Black communities, following record turnout in the 2020 election that flipped states like Georgia.

“I think the tragedy is that we have a Congress with a Senate that has a minority of misguided senators who will use the filibuster to keep the majority of people from even voting.” - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“Having seen the results and increasingly without the numbers or policy to win, there are those who have resorted to conspiracy theories, denying the legitimacy of the general election, and now implementing Jim Crow era voting laws that primarily target low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) voices,” said [Senator James I. Manning, Jr.](#) (D-North Eugene, West Eugene, Veneta). “This is unacceptable. Congress must uphold Dr. King’s memory and pass voting rights now.”

In 2000, Oregon became the nation’s first all vote-by-mail state. In 2021 the Legislature continued to expand voting rights by passing legislation like House Bill 3291, requiring ballots returned by mail that are postmarked by Election Day to be counted if received seven days after the date of the election. House Bill 3021, also passed in 2021, will ensure election materials are printed in the five most common languages spoken in Oregon, in addition to English.

The Legislature stands committed to advancing legislation to promote racial and economic justice. [Here is a sample list of bills passed](#) during the 2021 Legislative Session. In this coming session, Oregon Democrats will look to continue these efforts by supporting legislation to make voting easier, pushing for universal representation, pursuing criminal justice reforms, and passing worker rights legislation like overtime pay for farmworkers.

Oregon Democrats take this opportunity to celebrate Black history, culture, and contributions. Below are several celebrations and events happening across the state:

- The Skanner Foundation’s [36th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast Virtual Event](#)
- [Albina Soul Walk](#) - A self-guided audio tour hosted on the ECHOES mobile application, presented by Albina Music Trust and created by artist Megan Hattie Stahl. Music curation and oral history direction by Bobby Smith.
- Hollywood Theater, [Keep Alive the Dream Showing](#) at 3pm on Jan. 17 - Portland
- PSU’s “[Living the Legacy](#)” series of virtual campus and community events honoring the legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- OPB / PBS NewsHour, Keep Alive the Dream at 7pm on Jan. 17
- Willamette University Events: [Honoring Dr. King](#)
- [Yamhill County MLK Jr. Day Celebration](#) at 3pm on Jan. 17
- Upcoming [Black-Focused Art Exhibits](#) at the Portland Art Museum
- [Shifting Priorities to Create the Beloved Community](#) virtual event centered around inequities in healthcare at 12pm on Jan. 17

###