

**Governor's remarks during Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
commemorative service, Harrisburg, January 14, 1981
(05:14)**

>> Judge Morrison:...privilege to present the speaker of the hour, none other than the governor of our beloved commonwealth, his excellency Governor Richard L. Thornburgh.

[Applause]

>> Thornburgh: Thank you. Thank you, Judge Morrison, and welcome to all the distinguished guests who have joined us today. And a particular welcome to those young people who have come to the rotunda on Martin Luther King Day -- Jr. -- Martin Luther King Jr. Day observances. Martin Luther King Jr. was a giant in America's historical struggle for freedom and human dignity. He had a dream, and it is our responsibility to see that his dream does not die. Martin Luther King's life is remembered not only as a noble crusade against a previously impenetrable wall of racism, bigotry, and hatred, but also as a noble extension of the dream of this nation's founders, that all people possess certain inalienable rights, that together, people create governments to secure and defend those rights. Martin Luther King Jr. devoted his life to that dream, and for his dream, we are grateful. We remember Martin Luther King because, as America's conscience, he gave his life while trying to make our country a place where every individual could find freedom and opportunity. In accordance with Act 338 of 1974, I have proclaimed tomorrow, January 15, 1981, as Martin Luther King Jr. Day. It was also my privilege to sign an executive order three months ago, establishing January 15, 1981, to be a special holiday for employees under my jurisdiction to commemorate the birth of, as he wanted to be remembered, someone who tried to help somebody. This was the second time I have issued that particular order for a special holiday, and if all goes well, it will be the last. For if all goes well, it won't be necessary for any Pennsylvania governor to take special action to honor Dr. King's memory.

[Applause]

For if all goes well, the honors will be permanent and automatic, mandated by collective-bargaining agreements between the commonwealth and its employees. We are on the threshold of the first such agreement -- one in which the commonwealth and its largest employee union would join in recognizing January 15 as an official state holiday.

[Applause]

I'm sure all here present join me in hoping for a swift ratification of such a significant step in our march to full recognition of Dr. King's work. I'm sure we would also agree, however, that even this is not enough. I'm sure we would also agree that the time has truly come when the courage, the vision, the love, and the hope that this man brought to the hearts of millions of people around the world should be recognized by the Congress of the United States in the form of a national holiday.

[Applause]

Let us renew, then, our call for such a day, not merely for Dr. King, but for ourselves and our children, as well. And let us pray and renew our commitment to the lifelong goal, words that we will repeat later in this observance today that we shall overcome. Thank you.

[Applause]