

**H. R. 3706 — “An Act to Amend title 5,  
Unites Code, to make the birthday of  
Martin Luther King, Jr.,  
a legal public holiday.”**

**November 2, 1983**

**BACKGROUND**

On November 2, 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed H.R. 3706 officially creating Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as a federal holiday. The federal holiday established that Martin Luther King, Jr. Day would be nationally commemorated and observed as a holiday for federal employees. As with all federal holidays, state governing bodies and private employers can determine whether or not to close offices in honor of the federal holiday.



## DOCUMENT EXCERPT



### Ninety-eighth Congress of the United States of America

AT THE FIRST SESSION

Began and held at the City of Washington on Monday, the third day of January, one thousand nine hundred and eighty-three

#### An Act

To amend title 5, United States Code, to make the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., a legal public holiday.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section 6103(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting immediately below the item relating to New Year's Day the following:

"Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., the third Monday in January."

Sec. 2. The amendment made by the first section of this Act shall take effect on the first January 1 that occurs after the two-year period following the date of the enactment of this Act.

*Thomas P. O'Neill*  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

*Walter F. Rife*  
Vice President of the United States and  
President of the Senate

APPROVED

NOV - 2 1983

*Ronald Reagan*

Document courtesy of Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Archives

## QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between a bill and an act?

Take a look at "H.R. 3706 and answer the following questions:

2. Did this act originate in the House of Representatives or the Senate?  
How do you know this?
3. List three adjectives to describe how this act looks.
4. How many sections are in the act?
5. List the names of two people who signed the act.
6. When was Martin Luther King, Jr. day first observed?

**Background Research:** Read the additional documents online. How many members of Congress voted in favor of the act? How many voted against?

What were the reasons given for voting against the act?

## CONNECTIONS TO CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

- 11.10-Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.
- 12.3-Students evaluate and take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are, their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.
- 12.4-Students analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government as established by the U.S. Constitution.

