

Colleagues and Fellow Veterans:

I've sent this note out every year for the past several years and do so again because it is timeless. Perhaps it is my advanced years (sic) but every year I am struck by the fact that many folks may not appreciate the significance of this particular holiday – or perhaps are not old enough to have lived through these times. Please take a minute to read this over and pass it on if you like.

As we prepare to take off for a long weekend, it might be appropriate to take just a moment to think about why we aren't coming to work Monday ... Martin Luther King Day – for his commitment to equal rights, non-violence, and social change. The inspiration of Dr. King and the civil rights movement led our nation and the Federal government to a new standard of equality and inclusion, which was Dr. King's purpose. He wanted to challenge our country to be a better place, where every person is valued and respected.

Dr. King challenged us to overcome oppression and violence. He urged us to reject revenge, aggression, and retaliation. His vision that **“no individual be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character,”** set in motion changes that led to the passage of civil rights and voting laws. In honor and respect for his contribution to the improvement of our national attitudes, policies, and laws, the Federal government celebrates Dr. King.

Over the years, there has been some speculation on what Dr. King could have accomplished if his life had not been so tragically cut short. He was only 28 years old when he was elected the first President of the Southern Christian Leadership Council. He had already graduated from college at 19 and graduated from Divinity school at 22. By the time Dr. King was 29, he had published his first book, “Stride Toward Freedom.” In 1964, he gave his famous “I Have A Dream” speech to 250,000 people who marched on Washington in support of pending civil rights legislation. In the same year, he was successful in getting the legislation passed and he won the Nobel Peace Prize. *A lot of accomplishments for a man who was only 35 years old.*

Dr. Martin Luther King believed in our country and its potential for greatness. He also believed that each one of us is essential to achieving its full potential. Although Dr. King's primary efforts focused on equality for African-Americans, his ultimate goal was the equality and inclusion of every individual. As Dr. King said **“There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society, with a large segment of people in that society who feel that they have no stake in it; who feel that they have nothing to lose. People who have a stake in their society protect that society. But when they don't have it, they unconsciously want to destroy it.”**

This weekend gives us all another opportunity to reaffirm and reflect on our appreciation for the uniqueness that each individual brings to their community. Have a good and safe long weekend with friends and family.

v/r

Curtis L. Coy
Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity
Veterans Benefits Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Core Values: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, Excellence (“I CARE”)

Please Remember:

- If you would like to review prior messages sent through this listserv, click http://benefits.va.gov/vow/economic_opportunity.htm.
- If you would like to research, find, access, and, in time, manage your VA benefits and personal information please visit and/or register at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>.
- If you looking for a job or an employer committed to hiring Veterans, please register on the Veterans Employment Center (VEC) at: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs>
- If you are seeking employment in the federal government, particularly the VA, our VA for Vets high-tech tools and resources can help. Visit online at <http://vaforvets.va.gov/> or call 1-855-824-8387.

If you would like to contact us about your VA education benefits:

You can send us a secure email that will usually be answered within 48 hours. You can also search for answers to frequently asked questions and register to be notified of any updates to the information. This contact method is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can also be utilized worldwide. Click here to enter the "Ask A Question" site or here to review our frequently asked questions.

You can call 1-888-GIBILL-1 (1-888-442-4551). This line only accepts calls from 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM central time Monday – Friday.