

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to request that you use your administrative authority to designate the Kennedy-King Park site in Indianapolis as a National Historic Landmark.

This site is the location of Robert F. Kennedy's speech, delivered on April 4, 1968, which has been described as one of the most important speeches of the Twentieth Century. During a campaign stop in his run for president, Senator Kennedy was informed about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Rather than taking the advice of his advisors to cancel the event, Senator Kennedy chose to attend his event in an African American neighborhood of Indianapolis. Setting aside his prepared remarks, he spoke extemporaneously to break the news to Indianapolis residents who came out to support his candidacy.


Senator Kennedy called for a non-violent response to the violent death of Dr. King. He used his personal experience with the assassination of his brother, President John Kennedy, to relate to the assembled group's pain and to urge them to go home and pray for Dr. King's family and for our nation. His call for non-violence led the residents of Indianapolis to remain calm, without violence, rioting and looting that overtook many other big urban centers. This message resonates more strongly today, considering that just a few months after that speech, Robert Kennedy was assassinated. Yet, his speech kept Indianapolis calm and surely saved lives. Senator Kennedy's speech, calling for unity in the midst of turmoil and unrest, is timeless. A copy of the speech text is attached for your reference.

The individuals associated with this place are of transcendent importance to our nation's history, as much today as they were on April 4, 1968. The site's symbolic value also has national historic significance, particularly for the interpretive value that can promote non-violence in civic engagement in these turbulent times. We strongly believe that the traditions of non-violence to bring about social change, studied and lived by Dr. King, and practiced by Robert Kennedy at the site in Indianapolis, should be preserved and shared with future generations.


Today, this site's legacy continues, serving as a rallying point for social movements of all sorts, where people from across the country meet to pursue justice and tolerance through non-violent demonstration and dialogue. As the 50th Anniversary of this momentous speech approaches, we ask that you help us to complete the National Historic Landmark designation process in time for us to highlight the site's rich history in April.

On behalf of the Indiana Congressional Delegation, Rep. Joe Kennedy and Rep. John Lewis, we urge you to consider this request favorably and expeditiously. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Andrea Martin in Rep. Carson's office at andrea.martin@mail.house.gov or Rob Hicks in Rep. Brooks' office at rob.hickman@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



André Carson
Member of Congress



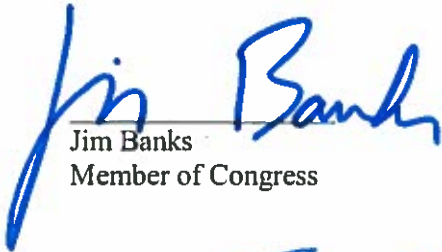
Susan Brooks
Member of Congress



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator



Todd Young
United States Senator



Jim Banks
Member of Congress



Larry Bucshon, M.D.
Member of Congress



Trey Hollingsworth
Member of Congress



Luke Messer
Member of Congress



Todd Rokita
Member of Congress



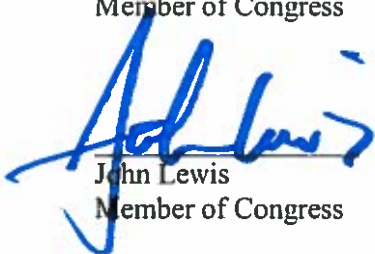
Pate Visclosky
Member of Congress



Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress



Joe Kennedy
Member of Congress



John Lewis
Member of Congress

FULL TEXT OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY'S SPEECH: INDIANAPOLIS, APRIL 4, 1968

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm only going to talk to you just for a minute or so this evening, because I have some very sad news for all of you. Could you lower those signs, please? I have some very sad news for all of you, and, I think, sad news for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world; and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and was killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee.

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between fellow human beings. He died in the cause of that effort. In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it's perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in.

For those of you who are black considering the evidence evidently is that there were white people who were responsible you can be filled with bitterness, and with hatred, and a desire for revenge.

We can move in that direction as a country, in greater polarization black people amongst blacks, and white amongst whites, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand, and to comprehend, and replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand, compassion, and love.

For those of you who are black and are tempted to fill with hatred and mistrust of the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I would only say that I can also feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a white man.

But we have to make an effort in the United States. We have to make an effort to understand, to get beyond, or go beyond these rather difficult times.

My favorite poet was Aeschylus. And he once wrote:

*Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget
falls drop by drop upon the heart,
until, in our own despair,
against our will,
comes wisdom
through the awful grace of God.*

What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness, but is love, and wisdom, and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or whether they be black.

So I ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King yeah, it's true but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.

We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times. We've had difficult times in the past, but we and we will have difficult times in the future. It is not the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; and it's not the end of disorder.

But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings that abide in our land.

And let's dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world. Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.

Thank you very much.