

Senate approves money for King memorial in D.C.

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Senate approved \$10 million to help begin groundbreaking for a memorial to Martin Luther King Jr. on the National Mall here — the first monument there to a person of color.

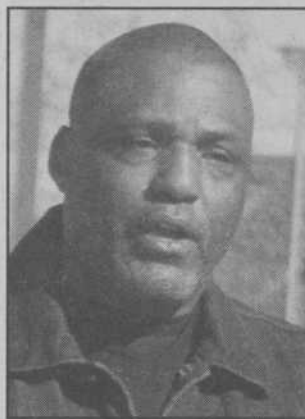
The \$100 million memorial to King is to be built on a four-acre site next to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. Construction is scheduled to begin in November 2006, provided sufficient fund-raising progress is made by the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial Project Foundation.

The group has already raised almost \$40 million in private funding for the memorial to the slain civil rights leader.

"I have come to appreciate how Martin Luther King Jr., sought to help our nation overcome racial barriers, bigotry, hatred, and injustice, and how he helped to inspire and guide a most important, most powerful, and most transforming social movement," said Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., the sponsor of the measure.

When he was a young man, Byrd was a member of the Ku Klux Klan and as a junior senator filibustered the 1964 Civil Rights Act. With time, he has changed his views and has spent decades rehabilitating his reputation.

The amendment was attached by voice vote to a spending bill financing the Interior Department for the budget year beginning Oct. 1. The Senate is set to pass the



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MLK Committee Las Vegas President

bill Wednesday. The House version of the measure, passed last month, does not contain funds for the memorial.

"This exciting news reconfirms Dr. King's place in history as an American hero to all citizens regardless of political affiliation, income,

education, race, gender and/or lifestyle," said Harry Johnson, Sr., president of the King Memorial Foundation.

In an interview, Johnson predicted the Senate's action would invigorate the campaign to secure private donations to build the memorial.

"Obviously, we are

pleased, said Wendell P. Williams, president of the MLK Committee of Las Vegas, the official chapter of The King Center in Atlanta, GA. Since November 2, 1983, when the U.S. Congress and President Reagan signed the bill into law making the third Monday of January a national holiday celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we have felt that the nation should not only celebrate the holiday, but also support endeavors such as this memorial which will forever keep us reminded of Dr. King's accomplishments. This financial commitment is a step in the right direction, but we must not forget the official, living memorial dedicated to the advancement of the legacy of Dr.

King— The King Center — which was established in 1968, to provide services and resources on a daily basis that allow the community to grow and prosper. The next objective should be to support The King Center with financial resources."

The underlying \$26.3 billion measure provides about \$542 million more than President Bush's request but \$751 million less than current spending levels. The EPA would absorb a \$144 million cut, about 2 percent, though senators rejected a \$370 million White House-proposed cut to an EPA clean-water fund that gives grants to states.

Kathi Overstreet of the Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice contributed to this article.

FDA OKs controversial heart drug for Black patients

Officials defend approval of drug for a single race; backlash high on both sides

WASHINGTON (AP) - Now that the Food and Drug Administration has for the first time approved a drug specifically for Blacks, medical experts are sure to debate the implications, with some questioning the validity of medical research that focuses on race.

"There are many, many who claim these use of" racial "categories may not have any biological meaning, only social meaning, and basing medical decisions on them may be problematic," said David Magnus, director of the Stanford Medical Center

for Biomedical Ethics.

For example, Magnus said, researchers also could look at whether a particular drug worked more effectively on Catholics than Protestants.

The more categories explored, the more likely one can find data showing that one category of people is helped more than the others when it comes to a particular medicine, he said.

"But the more we know genetically, the more we know these social categories don't correspond to genetic groups," Magnus said.

The FDA on Thursday approved the drug BiDil for the treatment of heart failure in Black Americans, calling it a step toward "the promise of personalized medicine."

Although that approval might prompt debate, a rejection of BiDil likely also would have raised serious questions.

Data clearly showed that BiDil had a positive effect on a population disproportionately burdened by cardiovascular disease, said Anne Taylor of the University of Minnesota Medical School and a lead investigator in the re-

search of BiDil.

"African-Americans between the ages of 45 and 64 are 2.5 times more likely to die prematurely from heart failure than their non-Black counterparts," she said.

"FDA approval of BiDil represents an important leap forward in addressing this health disparity."

FDA officials said that in the case of BiDil, researchers did not start out looking

for a drug that worked better for a particular racial group.

Two earlier trials of the drug on the general population of heart failure patients found no benefit, the FDA (See BiDil, Page 13)

Gordon

(Continued from Page 1)

relationship with the Bush administration.

"I believe there has to be some common ground that can be established between the White House and the NAACP that serves the mutual interests of both of those parties," he said. "So I expect going forward to find a way to forge that relationship."

Relations between the NAACP and Bush administration have been strained. Bond has condemned the administration's policies on education, the economy and the war in Iraq and urged high Black voter turnout to defeat Bush for re-election last year. And Mfume once described Bush's Black supporters as "ventriloquists' dummies."

An NAACP search committee invited Gordon to apply for the position in February. More than 250 candidates were considered, Bond said.

It became clear last week that Gordon was the only presidential candidate under consideration, a choice that marked a striking change for the NAACP. Most presidents have been political or religious leaders or prominent figures from the civil rights movement.

"He's not a minister or a politician, but this man's been doing it all along," said Eric

Cevis, a vice president in Verizon's retail division who has known Gordon since 1986. "He has a social accountability that he's been preaching for years."

Cevis said Gordon pioneered diversity efforts at Verizon for Blacks and other minorities, consistently pushing the company to improve its hiring and promotion practices.

Gordon was born in Camden, N.J., and raised with four siblings by parents who were both educators and civil right activists.

He serves on boards of Southern Co. and Tyco International Ltd. and is a trustee of Gettysburg College and the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation.


He was named one of *Fortune* magazine's 50 most powerful black executives in 2002 and executive of the year by *Black Enterprise* magazine in 1998.

"I think he's a godsend," said Leroy Warren, a board member from Silver Spring, Md., minutes after the board voted. "We need to get back to real civil rights and economic development... He has the intelligence to move forward."

After contract negotiations, Gordon is expected to be confirmed as president at the association's convention in July.

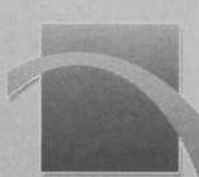
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