

# MLK SPECIAL EDITION

## BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

# The Weekly Press

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THURSDAY, JANUARY 19-25, 2023 A PEOPLE'S PUBLICATION VOL. 45 • NO.48 • FREE

**Congressman Troy Carter, HBCU Hosts Infrastructure Walkthrough with White House Senior Advisor, Infrastructure Coordinator**



Congressman Troy A. Carter, Sr.

BATON ROUGE, L.A. — Today, Congressman Troy A. Carter, Sr. (D-La.) toured Southern University and A&M College with White House Senior Advisor and Infrastructure Coordinator Mitch Landrieu Department of Transportation Secretary, Shawn Wilson, Southern University President-Chancellor Dennis Shields and other elected officials and stakeholders to observe ongoing projects from federal investments he championed.

"Southern University's physical plant has been neglected for the last 40 years," said Rep. Carter. "Last year I was able to obtain a \$7.62 million investment from the USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection Program to protect this beautiful community space from tumbling down the bluff. However, there is so much more that needs to be done. Today, I was grateful to be able to show Senior Advisor Landrieu the \$295,000,000 in physical plant needs and receive his commitment to help address them."

During the tour, Congressman Carter and the group visited several areas of the university, including the engineering and science buildings, the student center, and the historic A.W. Mumford Field. They

See **HBCU**, on page 5

## U.S. House agriculture leaders discuss anti-hunger measures



Baton Rouge Mayor Sharon Weston Broome is among city leaders participating in the U.S. Conference of Mayors this week in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Wes Muller)

"Food security provides a pathway to financial security," Thompson said.

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA Louisiana Illuminator

Congress could tackle in the upcoming farm bill. During a panel discussion, Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson of Pennsylvania, the new head of the Agriculture Committee, said he believes members of Congress can find com-

WASHINGTON — The new Republican chairman of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee and a top Democrat on the panel on Wednesday laid out anti-hunger initiatives



Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson of Pennsylvania

See **LEADERS**, on page 2

## Wes Moore sworn in to office as first Black governor of Maryland



Governor Wes Moore looks out on the crowd with his wife, Dawn, after being sworn into office on Jan. 18 in Annapolis, Md. (Photo by James Fields)

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore was sworn in as the state's first Black governor on Wednesday, punctuating his inauguration with references to Black history that included an acknowledgment of the enslaved people who once arrived by ship near the State House. The governor's inauguration was a historic and meaningful moment for the state of Maryland and the nation as a whole.

Governor Moore spoke about the need for unity and healing in the state, saying that "we are all Marylanders, and we will move forward together." He outlined plans to focus on economic recovery and improving education, as well as addressing issues of racial injustice and inequality. The governor also pledged to make Maryland a leader in the fight against climate change, and to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

The governor acknowledged the significance of his position as the

See **MOORE**, on page 2

## City of Baker Honors Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with Event "Speaking Up Against Injustice" and Dedication of Park



BAKER, La. — On Monday, January 16, 2023, the City of Baker hosted an event honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with the event "Speaking Up Against Injustice". The event was presided

over by Ms. Kinta Cage. The City of Baker School System Unity in Action Ensemble, led by Ms. Wanda Robinson, Choral Director, Mr. Roland Stewart, Assistant Director, and Mr. An-

thony Kaglear, Band Director provided the day's music. The invocation was by Dejah Jordan of Impact Charter School and the Baker Buffalo Festival Queen, Ms. Sarah Evans



led the pledge of allegiance. Following this Mayor Darnell Waites welcomed the crowd. Following the Mayor's address, the crowd enjoyed Army SPC and 2019 Baker graduate Mr. Robert (Nevar) Harrison's beautiful and impressive cover of "Glory" and young Mr. Travis Dabney's reading of Dr.

King's prolific speech "I Have a Dream". After the song selection and reading selection the crowd was treated to another musical selection by the City of Baker Unity in Action Ensemble and a poem by Mr. Brannon Ford of Impact Charter School.

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**WEATHER**

MON. 01/23 Sunny High 73°

TUE. 01/24 Thunderstorms High 65°

WED. 01/25 Partly Cloudy High 80°

THUR. 01/26 Mostly Sunny High 53°

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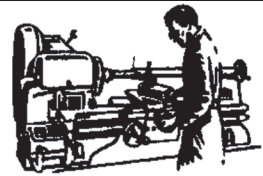
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Newspaper is published weekly in Baton Rouge and distributed every Thursday with a circulation of 7,500. Subscription rates are \$65.00 per year for Louisiana residents; \$72.00 for one year for out-of-state residents; half price for six months subscription; and \$1.00 per single copy.

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## Louisiana budget priorities: Where the governor, state lawmakers stand



The Louisiana Capitol Building, April 8, 2021. (Wes Muller/Louisiana Illuminator).

Gov. John Bel Edwards and Louisiana legislators agree that pay raises for K-12 school teachers, roads and bridges will likely benefit from the extra \$1.5 billion in state revenue that is expected to arrive over the next 18 months. But questions remain

about what other portions of state government might see an increase in support.

The governor's budget chief, Commissioner of Administration Jay Dardenne, said education and one-time spending projects would be the governor's priorities for the additional money. The legislature's Republican leadership said education and infrastructure are also their top concerns.

On top of the \$1.5 billion, the state is sitting on a sizable surplus of \$726 million from its previous budget year, but there are legal restrictions on how that money can be spent. At least a quarter of this surplus must go into the state's "rainy day" savings account. Another 10% needs to be used to pay down state retirement system debt. None of it can be used for ongoing expenses.

Despite all the extra cash, Dardenne and Republican lawmakers expressed a need to be conservative with the state's finances because Louisiana has a fiscal cliff looming in 2025. That's when a sales tax cut is expected to cost the state approximately an annual \$800 million in revenue.

For that reason, Dardenne and legislative leaders have said they want to limit the extent to which the additional money goes to cover ongoing expenses that will need to be paid for years to come.

Dardenne won't unveil the specifics of the governor's budget proposal until Feb. 17, but here's where he and legislative leaders said they would like to see the money go.

### State debt

One large expense legislators have repeatedly brought is the \$300-million-plus still owed to the federal government for the hurricane protection system built around New Orleans and its suburbs after Hurricane Katrina. Senate President Page Cortez, R-Lafayette, said there will likely be a push to use excess money to settle that bill.

Dardenne said the state is still

hopeful the federal government will agree to wipe out this debt. Louisiana has argued the state should receive credit for spending hundreds of millions of its own dollars on hurricane protection, covering the cost of this final payment. So far though, federal officials haven't agreed to walk away from it.

### Transportation projects

Over the past few years, Edwards and the legislature have dedicated hundreds of millions of more dollars to transportation projects, but inflation and building material shortages have driven project costs higher than initially estimated.

Dardenne, Cortez and House Speaker Clay Schexnayder, R-Gonzales, all said they want to put a lot of the state's additional money toward these cost overruns. Without more support, it will be difficult to get the transportation projects that have received money in previous years finished, they said.

If new transportation projects receive funding, they will be more modest in size than those that gained the most of the attention last year.

In 2022, Edwards and legislators agreed to put much of the state's excess money toward large projects such as a Mississippi River bridge crossing near Baton Rouge and the Interstate 10 Lake Charles bridge. This year, Dardenne and Cortez said regional transportation projects will be a higher priority.

Cortez said the state needs to look at building out infrastructure in Livingston and St. Tammany parishes, where state roads and bridges haven't kept up with a population explosion.

### K-12 teacher pay raises

While lawmakers emphasize they are reluctant to increase the state's ongoing expenses, many appear willing to make one exception. Several

See **BUDGET**, on page 5

## Why Rep. Troy Carter voted against banning oil reserve sales to China



Louisiana state Sen. Troy Carter delivers a victory speech to supporters who gathered at the Sugar Mill in New Orleans after Carter won the 2nd Congressional District election April 24, 2021. (Wes Muller/LA Illuminator).

BY: GREG LAROSE  
 Louisiana Illuminator

A majority of Democrats in the U.S. House backed a Republican bill last week to prohibit sales from America's emergency backup oil supply to Chinese companies. Among the 97 no votes in the minority party was Rep. Troy Carter of New Orleans.

"Quite frankly, this legislation was performance art," Carter said in an email response to the Illuminator.

President Joe Biden has tapped into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) multiple times to tamp down surging fuel prices for motorists. A state-owned company from China was among the buyers when the spigot was opened in April.

Although the Chinese purchase accounted for just 2% of the country's oil purchases from the United States, 331 lawmakers were adamant in putting restrictions in place for future SPR sales.

"When you sell oil from the

SPR you're selling oil into the market," Carter said. "Who the ultimate buyer is doesn't particularly matter because all it's doing is adding to the global supply of oil. I am not for limiting the President's ability to have all the tools any President might need to manage world crises."

A 50 million-barrel release from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in November was the largest in history, accounting for 8% of its total volume. In December, Biden authorized the federal government to buy oil from the private sector to replenish its stock.

The U.S. has exported nearly 420,000 barrels of oil and petroleum products to China since Biden took office in January 2021 through October 2022, according to Energy Information Administration data. The total from the first two full years of the Trump administration reached nearly 300,000 barrels, and more than 353,000 barrels were exported to China from 2019 through 2020.

## MOORE from page 1

first Black governor of Maryland, and recognized the sacrifices and struggles of those who came before him. He stated that he will work to continue the legacy of those who fought for civil rights and equality, and to ensure that all Marylanders have an equal opportunity to succeed. He also mentioned that he is aware of the responsibility that comes with being the first African-American Governor of Maryland and will take the opportunity to make sure that the State's government better serves all of its citizens.

In his speech, Governor Moore also emphasized the importance of working together and finding common ground in order to

move the state forward. He urged all Marylanders to come together and work towards a shared goal of making the state a better place for all its residents. He also emphasized that in order to achieve this, it's crucial to listen to different perspectives and to be open to new ideas.

Overall, Governor Moore's inauguration was a momentous occasion for the state of Maryland and for the nation as a whole. His message of unity, healing, and progress resonated with many, and his plans for the state have generated a lot of hope and optimism for the future. It is now up to the governor to deliver on his promises and to work towards building a better and more inclusive Maryland for all its residents.

## LEADERS from page 1

it comes to nutrition health and food deserts across America. He said he wants to focus on making nutritious food available, and affordable.

Thompson said he plans to have an emphasis on science, technology and innovation in the bill, which is a multiyear law that creates policy for agriculture and food programs. It is on track to be reauthorized this year.

"Food security provides a pathway to financial security," Thompson said.

### Concern about SNAP cuts

U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern of Massachusetts, a top Democrat on the committee, said he was concerned about potential cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides benefits for low-income families to purchase food.

As the top Democrat on the House Agriculture Nutrition, Oversight and Department Operations Subcommittee, McGovern said he is against rolling back any benefits to SNAP and his goal is to protect any cuts to the program.

"My priority on the nutrition section is to make sure that no one screws around with SNAP," he said.

Those who qualify for SNAP have an income level less than or equal to the federal poverty level,

and the amount of benefits is different in each state.

As part of the coronavirus relief package that Congress passed, it gave states the flexibility to temporarily increase SNAP benefits and waived some requirements for signing up for the program.

Thompson said he believes there's common ground that can be found in SNAP Employment and Training, which aims to help those in the program become more financially stable by helping with transportation issues and childcare.

McGovern said that the reality is that more working families have had to join the program, and that it's a policy failure that millions of children and families are struggling to feed themselves.

Congress temporarily expanded the Child Tax Credit in 2021, which provided refunds to families and lifted 2.9 million children out of poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Without the extension of the tax credit, there were 3.7 million more children in poverty in January 2022, according to a study by the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University.

The expanded credit was not renewed by Congress last year.

### Food prices on the rise

With inflation, prices of food have continued to rise, according to data collected by the U.S. Bureau of

Labor Statistics, which measures the consumer price index.

Both lawmakers noted that the mayors at the event were vital to tackling hunger in their communities, as they already have lines of communication with schools, community centers and understand where food deserts are located in their communities. Members of the U.S. Conference of Mayors are meeting in the nation's capital this week.

Some of the mayors in attendance included John Giles of Mesa, Arizona, Acquanetta Warren of Fontana, California, Levar Stoney of Richmond, Virginia, and Eric Adams of New York.

USDA data estimates that about 6% of the U.S. population, or 19 million people, live in food deserts.

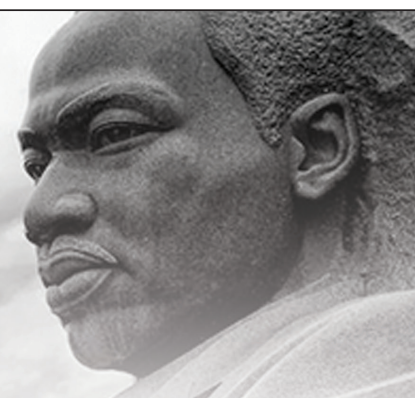
The mayor-president of Baton Rouge, Sharon Weston Broome, said in her community alone, 1 in 4 children are affected by childhood hunger.

"There's a correlation with poverty," she said, adding that poverty in her state remains too high.

Louisiana has a poverty rate of 19.6 percent.

"In the wake of the pandemic, many families are struggling to keep food on the table," Laura Carroll, the White House policy advisor for agriculture and rural policy, told lawmakers and the mayors in attendance.

She detailed how the White House is working to incorporate health policy into food and nutrition




# MLK DAY

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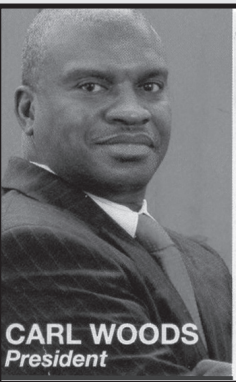
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# DC Honors Martin Luther King Jr.'s Legacy With Parade, Volunteering and Music

On Monday morning, thousands of residents flooded the historic Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue in southeast Washington, D.C. -- the thoroughway for the city's annual peace walk and parade in commemoration of the late civil rights icon.

More than 120 organizations registered to participate in the parade, the event's first return to force since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

"Just don't give up the fight. And that's what it means for me today," Denise Rolark Barnes, co-chair of the MLK Holiday DC Committee, told ABC News.

"We have to continue to support each other, to fortify ourselves in the best way that we can," Barnes said of the significance of Monday's event.

Organizers also warned of the commercialization of the national holiday that to many may be seen as more of a day off from work and school than a moment to reflect and engage in activism.

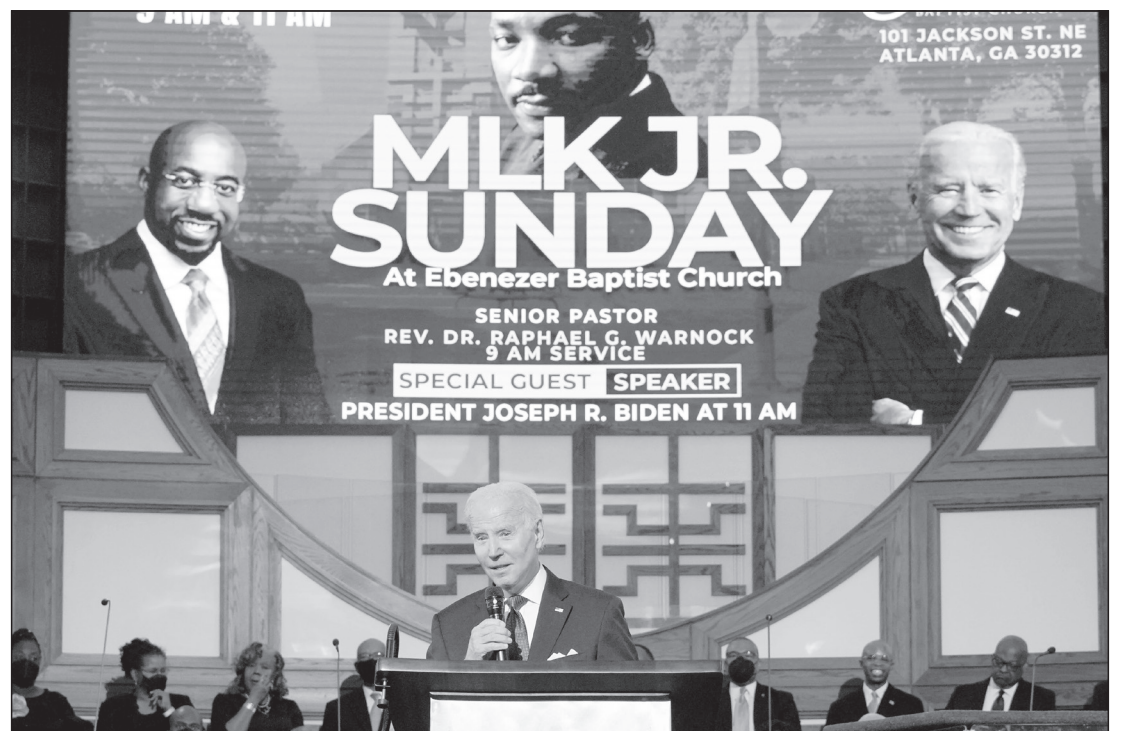
"The holiday, as they say, is not a day off -- it's a day on," said Philip Pannell, executive director of the Anacostia Coordinating Council.

"Dr. King said everyone can be great because everyone can serve. So if people can do something to help make this a better community, then we're keeping the spirit of Dr King alive," Pannell said.

The peace walk and parade, attended by hundreds of area organizations and thousands of participants, commenced at the R.I.S.E. Demonstration Center, where groups geared up for a music-filled march ending at Anacostia Park in southeast Washington.

The parade and walk featured bands and choreographed dance troupes, and community organizations set up stands offering free food, coffee and personal care products for attendees.

Across Washington, President Joe Biden commemorated the holi-



President Joe Biden speaks at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Sunday, Jan. 15, 2023, during a service honoring Martin Luther King Jr.

day alongside Rev. Al Sharpton at the National Action Network's annual breakfast for King.

In a keynote address, Biden touted the work that he said his administration has undertaken to improve the lives of Black and brown Americans.

"We have a lot of unfinished work to do though," he said. "A lot of unfinished work. We have to keep building on it and defend our progress because of this new Congress."

Biden, who also gave a sermon on Sunday at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist, where King had preached, highlighted investments in historically Black colleges and universities and Black-owned small businesses.

He told the audience, including civil rights leaders and members of Congress, that the United States stands at an "inflection point" on

King's project of racial equality.

Biden received robust applause after noting his historic nomination of Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first Black woman to serve on the high court. "She's about the smartest one of all of 'em," he said.

Of what he called unfinished promises, Biden said he didn't want to hear a word from "the other side" about his college student debt forgiveness program, which is being challenged in court. He criticized Republicans for what he called efforts to stall debt cancellation that would largely benefit Black students, 70% of whom, he noted, receive Pell grants that would be wiped out completely if his program is enacted.

"The path is clear: To go forward, we need to go together. So let's be guided by Dr. King's light," Biden

said, "and by the charge of scripture which is 'let us never grow weary in doing what is right.'"

Vice President Kamala Harris marked the holiday at George Washington University, where she participated in a leadership and service event alongside students and staff and Education Secretary Miguel Cardona.

Harris said the holiday was an opportunity to "work toward the ideals upon which our nation was founded, that we still have yet to achieve but we get closer each day when we believe in what is possible."

And at the National Mall, King's son Martin Luther King III, Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield and others gathered for a wreath-laying ceremony at King's memorial.

## BAKER from page 1

The City of Baker School System also awarded the winners of the "Speaking Up Against Injustice" Art Contest. The contest was judged by Judge Kirk Williams, City of Baker Courts, Baker City Councilman Charles Vincent, City of Baker Heritage Museum, and the Baker Branch Library Manager, Ms. Ashley Broussard. The contest was broken down into three groups of student ranges - K-3, 4-8, and 9-12. The winning art pieces. Dr. De'Ette Perry, Superintendent of

the Baker School System [pictured left] and Baker School System School Board President Mrs. Joyce Burgess [pictured below] presented the children with their recognition certificates as winners of the art contest. The winners were congratulated and joined by Mayor Waites for a group photo.

Following the program, all participants joined hands and marched outside for the dedication of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park. The procession was led by the City of Baker Unity in Action Ensemble. The crowd congregated at the newly erected

park monument for a ceremonial ribbon cutting and the recognition of prior council members who had passed the resolution honoring Dr. King.

Mayor Waites spoke giving recognition to the previous council members for their perseverance in seeing the resolution for the dedication through to completion. The resolution was read to the public and Mayor Waites presented each council member with certificates of recognition.

The dedication was completed with the ribbon cutting by Councilman Charles Vincent, prior

Councilwoman Joyce Burgess, and Councilman Robert Young. Following the ribbon cutting the ceremony was closed with the group singing "Lift Every Voice and Sing" accompanied by Army SPC and 2019 Baker graduate Mr. Robert (Nevar) Harrison.

Refreshments were served in the Municipal Auditorium following the event which were supplied by the Baker Fire Department. [pictured left Baker Fire Department Chief Keith Pease].

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**BUDGET** from page 2

lawmakers said they would support a permanent pay increase for K-12 school teachers, though no specifics were given about how large it might be.

"Everything we have in society comes from education," Cortez said. "We need to put a priority on that."

The governor has pushed teacher pay raises totaling \$3,300 overall during his seven years in office, but Louisiana is still behind neighboring states when it comes to teacher compensation. Louisiana's average public school teacher pay is below \$53,000, while the average for most other states in the region is above \$55,000.

Sen. Sharon Hewitt, R-Slidell, Republican Caucus Chairman and a candidate for governor, said Louisiana has no choice but to raise teacher pay again in order to remain competitive with the region.

Still, Republican House members expressed concern about the price of another teacher pay hike, especially with a fiscal cliff coming in just two years.

"We can't do like after Katrina and put the pay raise in, but then we don't have the dollars to keep it in," Schexnayder said in an interview.

Cortez said if teacher pay is increased, other areas of state government should not see increases to their budgets.

"Others are going to have to be at a standstill or reduced," he said.

Incentives for homeowner's insurance providers

The governor and legislators will put some of the state's extra money toward an incentive fund aimed at curbing sky-rocketing homeowner insurance rates. Insurance Commissioner Jim Donelon told lawmakers in December it would take at least \$45 million to get such a program off the ground.

**READ MORE** of this story ONLINE at [www.brweeklypress.com](http://www.brweeklypress.com)

# How the Martin Luther King Jr. birthday became a holiday



President Ronald Reagan at Signing Ceremony for Martin Luther King Holiday Legislation in the Rose Garden with Coretta Scott King, George Bush, Howard Baker, Bob Dole, Jack Kemp, Samuel Pierce, Katie Hall Looking on, 11/2/1983

The journey to establish Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a federal holiday was a long and arduous one, spanning 32 years and requiring the efforts of countless activists, politicians, and public figures. The movement began shortly after King's assassination in 1968, with Representative John Conyers introducing the first bill

to make King's birthday a federal holiday. However, it wasn't until 1983 that the bill was passed and signed into law by President Ronald Reagan.

The battle didn't end there, as supporters still had to push for individual states to recognize the holiday. This process was met with resistance, particularly in Arizona,

where a voter referendum in 1990 rejected the holiday. The National Football League threatened to move the 1993 Super Bowl from Tempe if the holiday was not approved, costing the state an estimated \$500 million in revenue. Arizona voters eventually approved the holiday two years later. South Carolina also put up a

fight, with the state being one of the last to approve a paid King holiday for state employees in 2000. The state's governor attempted to link the holiday to the flying of the Confederate battle flag, but ultimately signed a bill that approved the King holiday along with a Confederate Memorial Day.

Today, the King holiday serves multiple purposes: it honors King's legacy, focuses on civil rights, highlights the use of non-violence to promote change, and calls people into public service. The struggle to establish the holiday reflects all these topics, along with some interesting twists and turns along the way.

**HBUC** from page 1

also took a walk along the bluff, where they observed the progress of the erosion control project that was funded by the USDA investment. The group discussed the challenges faced by the university and the surrounding community,

including the need for more funding to improve infrastructure and facilities.

Rep. Carter emphasized the importance of Southern University to the Baton Rouge community and the state of Louisiana. He highlighted the many contributions that the university has made to the region over the years, in-

cluding its role as a major employer and economic driver. He also emphasized the importance of providing students with the best possible education and facilities to ensure their success.

Senior Advisor Landrieu and Secretary Wilson expressed their support for the university and the need for continued investment in

its infrastructure. They acknowledged the challenges faced by the university and the community, and committed to working with Rep. Carter to secure additional funding to address these needs.

The tour was a productive and informative one, and the group left with a renewed sense of determination to work together to

secure the funding necessary to improve Southern University and the Baton Rouge community. With the commitment of Rep. Carter, Senior Advisor Landrieu, Secretary Wilson, and other elected officials, Southern University is well on its way to securing the funding it needs to continue to be a vital institution in the region.

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Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. - Hebrews 10:25

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