

Sharpton, Labor, Civil Rights Groups to Lead March for Obama Jobs Bill

Written by Helen Trice Edney
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Rev. Al Sharpton, flanked by nearly a dozen civil and labor rights leaders, has announced a national march to call on Congressional support of President Obama's new jobs bill on the eve of the King Monument dedication.

"The other night, President Obama, in his address to the CBC, said that it is time to start marching again. Well, those feet will be marching October 15. Those of us that believe that it is necessary to raise the level of drama for those that have been left out of the conversation will be marching together on that day," Sharpton said at a Sept. 28 press conference at the National Press Club.

The American Jobs Act, introduced by President Obama last month, during a speech before a joint session of Congress, is an effort to bolster job opportunities to quell record unemployment rates, which have disparately affected the Black community. The march is set to take place the day before the rescheduled official unveiling and dedication of the Dr. Martin Luther King Monument Oct. 16, where Obama is set to speak.

"I think it is especially fitting that we march the day before President Obama officially unveils the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial," said Lee Saunders, secretary-treasurer of the 1.6 million-member American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). "Dr. King is a hero to our nation and his spirit will be felt throughout the world. Where ever people demand justice, his name is invoked and his accomplishments revered."

Dr. King was in Memphis as a guest of labor leaders preparing for a march on behalf of the poor when he was felled by an assassin's bullet April 4, 1968. The original march in conjunction with the King Monument unveiling was to take place on Aug. 27, but they both were postponed because of Hurricane Irene.

Other organizational co-leaders of the march include the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO); the Conference of National Black Churches; 1199 SEIU Healthcare Workers East; the American Federation of Teachers; Communications Workers of America; the National Education Association; the NAACP; the National Urban

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League and the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (NCBCP).

Melanie Campbell, president and CEO of the NCBCP, which encompasses Black Youth Vote and the Black Women's Roundtable, said the need to march to send a message to Congress is clear.

"Why do we march? We march because African-American unemployment is over 16.7 percent. We march because Black women's unemployment for August was at 14.7 percent. We march because Black men's unemployment for August was at 19.1 percent; and because Black youth unemployment is over 30 percent and in some areas over 50 percent," Campbell said. "For some reason, our elected officials are not standing up to the task of leadership." {jcomments on}