

**Statement of Rep. Mel Watt
to
U.S. House of Representatives**

April 15, 2008

I rise in support of H. Res. 1095, the resolution recognizing the 40th Anniversary of the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act (Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon Baines Johnson in April 1968, only one week after the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This landmark Act, the primary purpose of which is to prohibit discrimination in housing, introduced meaningful federal enforcement mechanisms for buyers and renters. The Federal Housing Act initially prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion and national origin. Sex was subsequently added to the list of protected classes in 1974 as well as disability and familial status in 1988.

40 years later, in 2008, effective and meaningful enforcement of these fair housing laws continues to be critically important. It is essential that we continue to combat housing discrimination which still exists today, not just by enacting laws, but by enforcing those that we already have on the books.