To Marjorie McKenzie Lawson

4 September 1959

[Montgomery, Ala.]

Following Massachusetts senator John F. Kennedy's failed bid for the vice presidency at the 1956 Democratic National Convention, he asked Washington attorney Marjorie Lawson and her husband, Belford, to help boost his profile among African Americans.1 At the 20 August meeting of the National Bar Association in Milwaukee, Marjorie Lawson approached King about the possibility of meeting Kennedy.2 In the following letter King informs Lawson that he is unable to meet with Kennedy until after October.3

1. Belford V. Lawson, Interview by Ronald J. Grele, 11 January 1966. Marjorie McKenzie Lawson (1912–1980), born in Pittsburgh, received a B.A. (1933) from the University of Michigan and law degrees from Terrell Law School (1939) and Columbia University School of Law (1950). For several years preceding Kennedy’s successful 1960 presidential bid, Lawson represented him at national gatherings of black religious, political, and women’s organizations, and she managed his 1958 senatorial reelection campaign in Boston’s black community. In 1962 Kennedy appointed Lawson to his Commission on Equal Employment Opportunities and to serve as judge of the Juvenile Court of the District of Columbia. During the 1950s and 1960s, she wrote a weekly public affairs column for the Pittsburgh Courier.

2. For King’s remarks at the event, see Address at the Thirty-fourth Annual Convention of the National Bar Association, 20 August 1959, pp. 264–270 in this volume.

3. See also Kennedy to King, 10 November 1959, p. 319 in this volume.
Mrs. Marjorie M. Lawson  
2001-11th Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C.  

Dear Mrs. Lawson:

Ever since returning home from Milwaukee I have been attempting to rearrange my schedule in order to make a trip to Washington to meet with Senator Kennedy. Unfortunately, however, it just hasn’t worked out. I found several important organizational matters and a good deal of accumulated mail that needed my immediate attention on my return. In the light of this it will not be possible for me to see Senator Kennedy before I leave for California and Hawaii. I would appreciate your speaking to him to ascertain when it would be possible for him to see me after the first of October.

I am deeply grateful to you for your interest in our coming together and I hope something fruitful can grow out of this proposed conference.

It was certainly a real pleasure to see you in Milwaukee. Give my best regards to your husband. Both of you are doing a marvelous job, and whenever you need me, please feel free to make it known.

Yours very truly,

Martin L. King, Jr.

MLK:mlb

TLC. MLKP-MBU: Box 29A.

Address to the House of Representatives  
of the First Legislature, State of Hawaii,  
on 17 September 1959  
Honolulu, Hawaii

After attending the National Baptist Convention in San Francisco and speaking in Los Angeles, King flew to Hawaii for several engagements and a brief vacation.1 Arriving just three weeks after Hawaii became the fiftieth state, he addresses the legislature at the state capitol, the Iolani Palace.2 King thanks the Hawaiians for...

1. King had received invitations from Ellen J. Watumull of the Watumull Foundation, whom he had met in India, and Shelton Hale Bishop of the Honolulu Council of Churches (Watumull to King, 21 May 1959, and Bishop to King, 1 July 1959). On 15 September King spoke to members of the Honolulu Ministerial Union about the lack of support for integration among white clergy (“King Says Alabama White Pastors Fight Integration,” Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 16 September 1959). The following day he delivered “A Pastor’s Hope for America” at the McKinley High School auditorium in Honolulu (Hubert H. White, “Dr. M. L. King Wins Friends in 50th State,” Los Angeles Sentinel, 24 September 1959).

2. For King’s invitation to address the House of Representatives, see “House Resolution no. 30,” 16 September 1959.