



Washington, D.C. Admission Act

Nearly 700,000 people call the District of Columbia home; they pay federal taxes and serve in the armed forces, but are denied a voice in the U.S. Senate and a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives. Only since the passage of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act on December 24, 1973, have residents of the District of Columbia had the privilege of electing their own mayor and legislature. However, unlike any other jurisdiction in the country all laws passed by the council and signed by the mayor are subject to a 30-day congressional review period. Because of this unique relationship between the District of Columbia and the United States Congress it's not uncommon to see Members of Congress — sometimes those who represent states thousands of miles away from Washington, D.C. — take advantage of this oversight to impose their personal political agenda and undermine the District's locally elected officials and the residents of the District of Columbia. The only way to guarantee residents of the District equal representation in Congress as well as full control of the laws and budgets passed by their locally elected officials is to pass the Washington, D.C. Admission Act (H.R. 51/S. 631) and admit the District of Columbia as the 51st state.

Statehood for the District of Columbia is a reproductive justice issue.

- During the federal appropriations process, lawmakers from across the country seize the opportunity to attempt to push politically motivated policies on the residents of the District. While these policies often vary from year to year, abortion-related riders are among the most common riders.
- For example, in years past Congress has passed annual riders prohibiting D.C. from using locally raised tax dollars to allow the D.C. Medicaid program to cover abortions. There was a brief window from August 2010 to April 2011 where D.C. Medicaid was allowed to cover abortion. During this time, D.C. Medicaid paid for over 300 abortions.¹ An abrupt change in policy on April 13, 2011 immediately impacted 28 women who had abortion appointments scheduled for April 14, 2011 who were now being told their D.C. Medicaid plan could no longer help them with the cost.² While the D.C. Medicaid ban could be lifted in a future appropriations bill, there is no guarantee that a future Congress would respect D.C. and not put the ban back in place. Admitting the District of Columbia as the 51st state and giving D.C. full control over their locally raised tax dollars is the only way to guarantee that D.C. is able to spend their locally raised tax dollars in a way consistent with the will of D.C. voters.

Statehood for the District of Columbia is a racial justice issue.

- According to the 2018 census estimates, the population of the District of Columbia is 47% Black, making the District the only state-like jurisdiction in the United States to have a plurality Black population. Additionally, the total population of the District is 55% non-White.³ Denying residents of the District of Columbia equal representation in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives disproportionately impacts communities of color since every jurisdiction in the United States where the majority or plurality of the population is White is guaranteed equal representation in Congress. Admitting the District of Columbia as the 51st state is the only way to guarantee that the more than 700,000 diverse residents who call D.C. home will enjoy the same representation in Congress as people who live in other states.

¹ Gresko, Jessica. "D.C. Funded 300 Abortions in 2 Years: AP." NBC Washington. Last modified July 8, 2011.

<https://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/DC-Funded-300-Abortions-in-2-Years-AP-125205009.html>.

² "Urgent: D.C. Medicaid Abortion Funding Ends at Midnight." D.C. Abortion Fund. Last modified April 13, 2011.

<https://dcabortionfund.org/2011/04/urgent-dc-medicaid-abortion-funding-ends-at-midnight/>.

³ "Quick Facts: District of Columbia." United States Census Bureau. Last modified July 1, 2018.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/districtofcolumbiadistrictofcolumbia,US/PST045218>.

Residents of the District of Columbia overwhelmingly support statehood

- Residents of the District of Columbia first voted on statehood on November 2, 1982 and most recently on November 8, 2016 when 86% of voters approved a referendum advising the D.C. Council to petition Congress to be admitted as the 51st state.⁴
- On April 15, 2019, District of Columbia Attorney General Karl Racine released a coalition letter signed by twenty Attorneys General from across the country. These Attorneys General hail from states across every region of the country. In their letter the Attorneys General wrote: “The District’s over 700,000 residents work hard, raise families, and pay the highest federal taxes per capita, and yet they are deprived of the fundamental right to participate meaningfully in our representative democracy. The District of Columbia deserves a voice in this country’s legislature and should be able to govern itself like any other state. The District’s residents deserve equal voting rights and autonomy under the law. We support Statehood for the District of Columbia and urge passage of H.R. 51 to accomplish this goal.”⁵

Constitutionality of admitting the District of Columbia as a State

- Opponents of D.C. statehood often cite constitutionality as their primary concern. Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution provides Congress the power to establish a federal district not greater than 100 square miles to serve as the federal capital. While the federal district serving as the capital cannot be greater than 100 square miles the constitution does not establish any minimum size requirements for the federal district.⁶
- When the District of Columbia was first established in 1790 it was exactly 100 square miles. In 1847, approximately 32 square miles of District land was returned to the Commonwealth of Virginia during a process called retrocession, leaving the District at its current size of approximately 68 square miles.⁷
- The passage of the Washington, D.C. Admission Act would not admit the entire District of Columbia as the 51st state. Instead it would designate a new federal district — which would include the U.S. Capitol, the National Mall, and the White House — as the seat of the federal government and the remainder of the current District of Columbia would be admitted as the State of Washington, D.C. By keeping a smaller federal district intact as the federal capital, many experts and Attorneys General agree Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution would be satisfied since a federal district would still exist and would not exceed 100 square miles.⁸

The only way to guarantee the residents of the District of Columbia receive equal representation in government, as well as guarantee the people of the District of Columbia control their own political destiny moving forward is to pass the Washington, D.C. Admission Act and admit the District as the 51st state.

⁴ "General Election 2016 - Certified Results." District of Columbia Board of Elections. Last modified November 8, 2016. https://electionresults.dcooe.org/election_results/2016-General-Election.

⁵ Racine, Karl A. "20 Attorneys General Declare Support for DC Statehood for the First Time." Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia. Last modified April 15, 2019. <https://oag.dc.gov/release/20-attorneys-general-declare-support-dc-statehood>.

⁶ "The Constitution of the United States." National Archives. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript#toc-section-8->.

⁷ "Washington, D.C. History F.A.Q." Historical Society of Washington, D.C.. <http://www.dchistory.org/publications/dc-history-faq/>.

⁸ Norton, Eleanor H. "H.R.51 - Washington, D.C. Admission Act." Congress dot gov. Last modified January 3, 2019. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/51/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr51%22%5D%7D&r=1&s=1>.