

## **PR: Statement for Tuesday's Congressional Hearing**

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Washington — Occupy DC at McPherson Square/K Street has released a statement to be read at the congressional hearing Tuesday called by multi-millionaire Republican Representative Darrell Issa. As the hearing begins on whether the government should move to shut down free speech and eliminate the right to peaceably assemble in the nation's capital, it should be noted Issa received more than 90 percent of his campaign contributions from outside of his district, and it is curious he is focusing on a park on the opposite side of the country from the area he represents.

*The following statement was approved by the Occupy DC (McPherson Square) General Assembly on January 21, 2012, to be read at hearing addressing McPherson Square this Tuesday in the Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and the National Archives, part of the Oversight Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.*

Like so many Americans whose voices are not heard in the halls of Congress, we have been precluded from speaking today on a matter that directly concerns us. That we have to ask a member of Congress to speak here for us is symbolic of the disenfranchising top-down nature of the government we are fighting to democratize.

Citizens of a free country should not have to ask for permission to occupy public spaces. Our occupation of McPherson Square is an expression of our right to free speech and peaceful assembly. We are maintaining a site of protest — a physical presence that gives visibility and voice to our dissent. We are creating a space in which free speech flourishes — not only the speech of occupiers, but that of the general public, the empowered and the disenfranchised alike.

Like most people, the members of Occupy DC at McPherson Square do not relish being in uncomfortable conditions that humans without housing have endured for millenia. We do so because it has become a necessary tactic to express our concern for the country's direction in a way that will maintain public attention. Two out of every three Americans, incidentally, agree that our country is headed in the wrong direction. A far smaller percentage approves of the job Congress is doing. And while foreclosures have become a hallmark of modern America, the solutions to our country's numerous problems do not include suppressing free speech and evicting peaceful patriots from their tents.

Representative Issa's motivations for this investigation are clearly political. A vote with him is a symbolic vote for the status quo of money in politics over the value of grassroots democratic expression for the betterment of our country.

The very existence of a committee of politicians controlling a city none of them were elected in is offensive. Though McPherson Square happens to have been declared federal land, D.C.'s forced submission to congressional control is the height of hypocrisy for a nation that considers itself the global arbiter of democracy.

The members of Occupy DC at McPherson have worked hard to build, clean and maintain our site of protest since the beginning of October We are happy to work with the National Park Service, Department of Health, and the city of Washington to improve the health and safety of our conditions. Unfavorable conditions in the park are a distraction from Congress getting to work on the many challenges our country faces today. Let's work together to improve the conditions of our site and to make this country a better place.

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**Original Link: <http://occupydc.org/pr-statement-for-tuesdays-congressional-hearing/>**