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House of Representatives

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Opening Statement Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney Hearing on “H.R. 51: Making D.C. the 51st State” March 22, 2021

Good morning. Last Congress, I was proud to preside over [the first markup](#) of legislation to grant D.C. statehood since 1993. And for the first time ever, the House [passed](#) legislation in 2020 that would have made D.C. a state. But the Republican controlled Senate refused to even consider that bill.

Even though we are only a few months into the new Congress, H.R. 51 already has 215 cosponsors. After years of stagnation and indifference to the rights of hundreds of thousands of D.C. residents, there is real and sustained momentum behind this effort.

[This legislation](#) would fulfill the promise of democracy for more than 712,000 Americans who call Washington, D.C. their home.

D.C. residents are American citizens. They fight honorably to protect our nation overseas. They pay taxes. In fact, D.C. pays more in federal taxes than 22 states, and more per capita than any state in the nation.

D.C. residents have all the responsibilities of citizenship, but they have no congressional voting rights and only limited self-government.

These fundamental disparities for hundreds of thousands of Americans conflict with the core principles of our Republic.

Our country was founded on the belief that no people should be subjected to taxation without representation or be governed without the consent of the governed.

Representative government only functions properly when all people have a voice in the laws that govern them. Our honorable colleague, Congresswoman Norton, represents her constituents exceptionally well, but is denied the opportunity to vote on the very laws that her constituents must follow.

Congress has the responsibility to live up to the Constitution’s goals. Statehood will finally grant D.C. residents full and equal democratic rights. D.C. residents themselves overwhelmingly support statehood. In 2016, an astonishing 86 percent voted in favor of becoming a state.

Unfortunately, there is not one Republican cosponsor of this bill. In July 2020, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina [stated](#), “This is about expanding the Senate map.” He misses the point entirely.

The sad truth is that most of my most of my Republican colleagues oppose D.C. statehood simply because they believe it would dilute their power. In 2016, then-Ohio Governor John Kasich was very blunt about this. He [said](#), “What it really gets down to if you want to be honest is because they know that’s just more votes in the Democratic Party.”

Adding D.C. as a state should not be about politics. It is about equality and democracy. It is the responsibility of Congress to ensure that Americans are given their full rights demanded by the Constitution.

My colleagues across the aisle are so concerned about maintaining the status quo that they are willing to make claims with no basis in fact in an effort to continue disenfranchising 712,000 Americans.

Just last week in a press release about this hearing, Ranking Member Comer claimed that H.R. 51 doesn’t address the financial burden on the new state. This is incorrect. The bill specifically includes transition assistance to the new state, something Congress has historically done when admitting new states into the Union.

The simple truth is that the right to democracy should not be contingent on party registration. Today, I urge all Members of this panel to rise above partisanship. I encourage everyone to have a respectful and robust debate, with the fundamental goals of our Founders in mind.

As President Abraham Lincoln declared in the Gettysburg Address, a true democracy is “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

I thank all our witnesses for being here today. I also thank the people of the District of Columbia for your patience, dedication, and fierce will to secure the rights you deserve.

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