

MINORITY DAY, CONTINUATION OF H.R. 51:
“MAKING D.C. THE 51st STATE,
FROM SEPTEMBER 19, 2019”

HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON
OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

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**MINORITY DAY, CONTINUATION OF H.R. 51:
“MAKING D.C. THE 51ST STATE,
FROM SEPTEMBER 19, 2019”
Thursday, December 19, 2019**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 12:10 p.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Carolyn B. Maloney [chairwoman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Maloney, Norton, Raskin, Kelly, Tlaib, Haaland, Porter, and Jordan.

Chairwoman Maloney. The committee will come to order.

The committee is now reconvening its hearing on H.R. 51, the Washington, DC, Admission Act which recessed on September 19, 2019.

On that day, Ranking Member Jordan and other Republican committee members sent a letter requesting six additional witnesses for a subsequent minority day of hearing pursuant to House rules. As they wrote in that letter—and I quote—we look forward to your scheduling this hearing promptly.

On November 21, 2019, I became chairwoman of this committee. At that time I was unsure whether Ranking Member Jordan still wanted the minority day of hearings. However, four days later, on November 25, 2019, you sent a letter to me insisting that we go forward. So after informing his staff, I sent letters on December 12, 2019, conveying invitations to each of the six witnesses they sought for today’s minority day of hearings.

Obviously, they have declined to testify, and we have no witnesses before us today. That is their right, since they are not compelled to testify in response to the ranking member’s request. As a result, we will adjourn today’s hearing.

However, before I do that, I would be willing to recognize Ranking Member Jordan, if he has anything he would like to say.

Mr. JORDAN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am disappointed we are here today. The Republicans requested a minority day hearing on the D.C. Statehood issue and specifically information about Mr. Evans and his conduct. But Democrats refused to allow us to examine the serious allegations of misconduct levied against D.C. council member Jack Evans.

The committee cannot assess D.C.’s readiness to be a state until we fully understand the nature and extent of Council Member Evans’ misconduct. This should not be a partisan issue.

Senior members of the Democrat majority have said that the documents the committee has received in its investigation, quote, paint a disturbing picture of Mr. Evans’ ethical transgressions.

Your choice to schedule the minority day hearing now, between our markup this morning and the subcommittee hearing this afternoon, and on the last day of scheduled business in this congressional session, disappoints us. Your decision to only minimally consult with Republican staff and to proceed with the hearing today over our objection is a bad sign for the rights of the minority for the rest of this Congress.

Because you didn't consult Republicans, your invitation letters for the witnesses we requested did not properly explain the purpose of their testimony. And so it was no surprise that several witnesses replied that they would not attend. I think five of the six said they would not attend and one just didn't show up.

Quite simply, these witnesses have direct firsthand information about Mr. Evans, about his misconduct, information that the committee needs to do its proper oversight.

At the end of the day, we are most disappointed by the fact that the Democrat majority apparently has no desire to join Republicans in asking serious questions about WMATA and the D.C. Government.

On December 10, we requested that Democrats schedule transcribed interviews with several individuals involved in the WMATA investigation into Mr. Evans. We received no response. On September 16, we asked the Democrats to invite Evans to testify at the hearing we had in September regarding H.R. 51. That request was refused as well.

Instead, Democrats asked the WMATA Inspector General to examine the matter. Unfortunately, the inspector general's investigation should not be a substitute for congressional oversight, especially when the issue is squarely within our jurisdiction, as WMATA and D.C. are.

In fact, if Democrats would have consulted with the Inspector General prior to scheduling this hearing, you would know that he believes public testimony at this time could harm his investigation. But you didn't consult with him, and you scheduled the minority day hearing for today. It would impede the investigation the Democrats asked him to do.

The committee cannot mark up H.R. 51 until the committee seriously examines D.C. Council Member Evans' misconduct. We owe the citizens of D.C. that much, and we owe that to our constituents from Ohio, Wisconsin, Tennessee, and Texas, who currently subsidize some municipal operations of the district.

This is what we should have been focused on today. Instead, the Democrats just want to play games with the minority rights, and unfortunately, we are in the situation we are.

I yield back.

Chairwoman Maloney. I thank the gentleman for his remarks, and this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:15 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]