

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

INTRODUCTION OF THE WASHINGTON, D.C. ADMISSION ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 4, 2021

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Washington, D.C. Admission Act with 202 cosponsors, a record number of original cosponsors of the District of Columbia statehood bill. This is the most important bill I introduce each Congress, and it made historic strides in the last Congress. District residents have always been citizens of the United States and pay more federal taxes per capita than the residents of any state, but are the only federal income taxpaying Americans who do not have full and equal citizenship rights. The denial of local control on local matters and of equal representation in Congress can be remedied only by statehood. My introduction of this bill this Congress comes after this Chamber's historic and decisive passage of the Washington, D.C. Admission Act in the 116th Congress. I look forward to building on our historic momentum.

The Washington, D.C. Admission Act creates a state from the eight hometown wards of the District. This 51st state, of course, would have no jurisdiction over the federal district that now consists of the Washington that Members of Congress and visitors associate with the capital of our country. The U.S. Capitol, the White House, the U.S. Supreme Court, the principal federal monuments, federal buildings and grounds and the National Mall would remain in the federal district, which would be called the Capital. Our bill provides that the State of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth would be equal to the other 50 states in all respects, as is always required, and that the residents of the State of Washington, D.C. would have all the rights of citizenship, including two senators and, initially, one House member.

A substantially similar version of the Washington, D.C. Admission Act was the first bill I introduced after I was first sworn in as a Member of Congress in the 102nd Congress in 1991. Our first try for statehood received significant support in the House. In 1993, the House voted on the D.C. statehood bill, which was the first time either Chamber had done so, with nearly 60 percent of Democrats and one Republican voting for the bill. The Senate held a hearing on various approaches to representation for D.C., but the committee of jurisdiction did not proceed further. In the 113th Congress, our statehood bill got unprecedented momentum with the Senate's first-ever hearing on D.C. statehood. That was the first congressional hearing on D.C. statehood in more than 20 years, since the House held a hearing on statehood in 1993. In the 113th Congress, we obtained a record number of cosponsors in the House and Senate, including then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, as well as the other top three Democratic leaders

in the Senate. In addition, then-President Barack Obama endorsed D.C. statehood in a public forum before the statehood hearing was held. In the 115th Congress, not only was there a record number of original cosponsors of the bill, with 116 in the House and 18 in the Senate, but also a record number of cosponsors in the House (181) and Senate (30).

The 116th Congress, however, represented a turning point in the march to D.C. statehood. For the first time in American history, a Chamber of Congress voted to make Washington, Douglass Commonwealth the 51st state. We introduced the bill with a record number of original cosponsors in the House (155) and Senate (28), and had, by far, a record number of cosponsors in the House (227), which was more than enough to pass the bill with cosponsors alone, and in the Senate (42). More than 100 national organizations endorsed the bill.

The United States is the only democratic country that denies the residents of the nation's capital both voting rights in the national legislature and local autonomy. We have both the moral obligation and legal authority to end this injustice.

Statehood is the only solution for full and equal citizenship rights for residents of the District. To be content with less than statehood is to concede the equality of citizenship that is the birthright of our residents as citizens of the United States. That is a concession no American citizen has ever made, and one that D.C. residents will not tolerate in their 220th year of fighting for equal treatment in their country. This bill reaffirms our determination to obtain each and every right enjoyed by citizens of the United States, by becoming the 51st state in the Union.

Since the nation's founding, District residents have always carried all of the obligations of citizenship, including serving in all of the nation's wars and payment of federal taxes, all without equal voting representation on the floor in either House of Congress or freedom from congressional interference in purely local matters.

D.C. statehood has both the facts and the Constitution on its side. The Constitution does not establish any prerequisites for new states, but Congress has generally considered three factors in admission decisions: resources and population, support for statehood and commitment to democracy.

D.C. pays more federal taxes per capita than any state and pays more federal taxes than 22 states. D.C.'s population of 712,000 is larger than those of two states, and the new state would be one of seven states with a population under one million. D.C.'s budget is larger than those of 12 states, and D.C.'s bond rating is higher than those of 35 states. D.C. has a higher per capita personal income and gross domestic product than any state. Eighty-six percent of D.C. residents voted for statehood in 2016. In fact, D.C. residents have been fighting for voting rights in Congress and local autonomy for 219 years.

The Constitution's Admissions Clause gives Congress the authority to admit new states,

and all 37 new states have been admitted by an act of Congress. The Constitution's District Clause sets a maximum size of the federal district (100 square miles). It does not set a minimum size. Congress previously has changed the size of the federal district, including reducing it by 30 percent in 1846.

I seek statehood for the Americans I am honored to represent. At the same time, D.C. statehood is deeply personal for me. My great-grandfather Richard Holmes, who escaped as a slave from a Virginia plantation, made it as far as D.C., a walk to freedom but not to equal citizenship. For three generations my family has been denied the rights other Americans take for granted. There are many other D.C. residents like me.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

HONORING JOSEPH A. PROVONCHA,
THE MOST SENIOR COUNTY
CLERK IN NEW YORK STATE,
FOR HIS LONG-TIME SERVICE TO
NEW YORKERS

HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 4, 2021

Ms. STEFANIK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Joseph A. Provoncha for his service and dedication to his community as the most senior County Clerk in New York State.

Joseph first took office on January 1, 1992 as an Essex County Clerk and was elected to his eighth term in 2019. Joseph is now the most senior County Clerk in New York State. Throughout his career, he has held a variety of different positions in addition to his roles as County Clerk and Agent for the DMV Commissioner; these include Records Management Officer, Commissioner of Jurors, and Commissioner of Youth Services. He has been recognized many times throughout his prominent career being presented with the Liberty Bell Award by the Essex County BAR Association in 1997 and in 2014, the Lifetime Achievement Award by the New York State Association of County Clerks in 2001, and the William H. Kelley Annual Archives Award by the New York State Archives and the Archives Partnership Trust in 2018. He was named Clerk of Year in 1996. Additionally, he served as the Association President of the New York State Association of County Clerks in 2000 and has been serving as the Recording Secretary since 2006.

Joseph's exemplary service is a testament to the character of our North Country neighbors. In his role, he has ensured anyone who walks into the Essex County Clerk's Office leaves with their questions answered and problems solved. His longtime dedication to his role as County Clerk has served the community very well as he has spent his career assisting others navigate the complexities of bureaucracy.

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