

It is a weak argument at best. Our Federal judiciary has long treated the District of Columbia as a "State" for many purposes. For example, the 16th amendment of the Constitution grants Congress the power to tax our incomes, "without apportionment among the several states." The 16th amendment has been interpreted to apply to DC residents; the Federal Government can and does require residents of Washington, DC, to pay Federal income taxes.

DC residents are also required to serve on Federal juries and register for selective service. Why should the right to vote be any different?

I think when we look at this basic purpose, the right to vote for congressional representation, the people who live in Washington, DC, deserve it.

Do opponents of DC voting rights believe that residents of America's Capital City should bear the full responsibilities of citizens but do not deserve the full rights of citizens?

It is not just Democrats who believe the DC voting bill is constitutional. Several prominent Republicans, including Kenneth Starr, Jack Kemp, and Viet Dinh, principal author of the PATRIOT Act, have testified that the bill meets constitutional muster.

Yesterday, September 17, marked the 220th anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution. This is a time to celebrate the genius of the Framers who had the vision and insight—in the year 1789—to lay the foundation for what has become the world's oldest democracy.

The Constitution our Framers gave us was a brilliant document—but not a flawless one. It denied full participation in our democracy to the people of Washington.

Over the past two centuries, we have refined the Constitution to expand the right to vote to all Americans. We have expanded freedom. Some expansions of voting rights have come as a result of constitutional amendment. In other cases, Congress has expanded the right to vote by statute.

Just last year, this Congress reauthorized the Voting Rights Act, which another, courageous Congress first passed in 1965. The Voting Rights Act is often considered the most important civil rights law ever passed by Congress. It removed poll taxes and dismantled Jim Crow.

A few weeks ago, on September 5, the Senate Judiciary Committee—on which I serve—held a hearing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1957. One of the witnesses at that hearing was a hero of mine and a giant of our civil rights movement: Representative JOHN LEWIS of Georgia.

Representative LEWIS testified about discrimination against African Americans when he was growing up in Alabama. He talked about the inspiration he drew from meeting Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks. He talked about how far we have come as a nation when it comes to the treatment of

African Americans and persons of color. And he talked about the progress we have made when it comes to voting rights.

JOHN LEWIS was nearly beaten to death on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL, marching for voting rights in 1965. He put his life on the line for the right to vote. So I think we should take special note of what JOHN LEWIS had to say when he was asked at the Judiciary Committee hearing about the bill that would create voting rights for the residents right here in Washington, DC.

JOHN LEWIS said the following:

[We are going to say to the District of Columbia, where people leave this district, leave this city, they go and fight in our wars, and then they cannot participate in the democratic process. That is wrong.

The Senate can heed those words this week. The Senate can give the residents of Washington, DC, a voice in Congress.

For two centuries, Washington, DC, residents have fought and died in this Nation's wars, often suffering among the highest casualty rates.

Twenty-three Washington, DC, residents have been killed or wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Haven't the residents of this city earned the right to have their voices heard, and their vote count, in the House of Representatives? Haven't the people of Washington, DC, waited long enough?

Washington, DC, is the only capital city in the world whose citizens do not have voting representation in their national legislature.

For over 200 years, Washingtonians have been mere spectators to our great democracy.

In the course of our Nation's history, we have many times expanded freedom and expanded voting rights to people whom our Founders, in their incomplete genius, left out.

This week, we have an opportunity, and an obligation, to take another important and long overdue step forward in the historic struggle for voting rights by giving the residents of the District of Columbia a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives. Let us vote for the right to vote.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). The clerk will call the roll. The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE ACCESS ACT OF 1999

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to the consideration of H.R. 1124, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1124) to extend the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of H.R. 1124 and the opportunity it provides for DC's college-bound students. The reauthorization of the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999 would continue a successful and effective scholarship program.

The DC tuition assistance grant program, or DCTAG, provides scholarships to cover the difference between in-State and out-of-State tuition for eligible DC residents attending any public college or university in the country. DCTAG awards those recipients up to \$10,000 annually and \$50,000 total in tuition assistance.

The original purpose of the bill was to address concern that college-bound students in the District were at a disadvantage because DC lacks a State university system. DCTAG expanded higher education opportunities by allowing students to attend public universities and colleges nationwide at in-State tuition rates.

The original bill also allows students to attend a limited number of non-profit private schools to receive scholarships of up to \$2500 annually and \$12,500 total. Students who attend any historically black college or university or any private school in the District, Maryland, or Virginia qualify for private school grants. The 2002 reauthorization clarified that the grants were only for U.S. citizens residing in DC.

The success of the program is clear. Since the launch of DCTAG in 2000, participation among DC residents more than doubled from 1,900 recipients to 4,700 recipients. DCTAG has awarded 26,000 grants totaling over \$141 million to 9,769 District students. I am pleased to say that a few of those grants went to students attending the University of Hawaii at Manoa in my home State.

Not only are more students receiving grants; more are going to college. The college enrollment rate for DC public school students has doubled to 60 percent and 38 percent of students in the program are the first ones in their family to attend college. DCTAG affords many District residents a chance to go to college when they otherwise would not be able to afford it.

In July, my Subcommittee on the District of Columbia held a hearing with the Mayor and his education leadership team on their reform proposal for the public school system. They offered a realistic picture of DC public schools and a realistic vision for accountability and reform.

The Chancellor of Education, Michelle Rhee, and the Mayor are working very hard to improve the unacceptably low performance of DC students by recruiting talented teachers, reforming the administrative offices, and repairing crumbling schools. They deserve all the support that the Congress can provide in their efforts.