

Legislation Text

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Calling upon the United States Congress to admit Washington, District of Columbia as the 51st state in our Union.

WHEREAS, Article IV, Section 3, Clause 1, of the U.S. Constitution authorizes the Congress to admit new states into the Union on an equal footing with existing ones; and

WHEREAS, Of the 37 state admissions to date, most have occurred when the organized government of a territory expressed the sentiment of its population in favor of statehood, usually by referendum, after which Congress empowered that government to organize a constitutional convention to write a state constitution, the acceptance of which both by the people of the territory and then by Congress, with the latter adopting by simple majority vote a joint resolution granting statehood, which the President of the United States signs and issues a proclamation announcing that a new state had been added to the Union; and

WHEREAS, The City of Washington, District of Columbia ("D.C.") is the only political and geographic entity within the United States of America whose citizens bear all of the responsibilities of citizenship, including taxation and Selective Service registration, without sharing in the full rights and privileges of citizenship through voting representation in Congress; and

WHEREAS, At more than 700,000 residents, the population of the D.C. is already larger than two states - Vermont and Wyoming - and comparable to that of several others including Alaska and Delaware, without accounting for its rate of population growth; and

WHEREAS, More than 11,000 D.C. residents currently serve in the United States Armed Forces, and since World War I more than 200,000 D.C. residents have so served our nation, yet these citizens have no voting voice on the Congressional decisions regarding war and peace; and

WHEREAS, The residents of D.C. collectively pay more in federal income taxes than those of 22 states, but have no voting voice in congressional deliberations on how their tax dollars are spent; and

WHEREAS, The courts, budget, and laws that govern local decisions affecting the residents of D.C. must go before Congress for special approval, though the citizens of D.C. have no voting voice there; and

WHEREAS, The unprecedented violent attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6th of this year dramatized the dangers to the residents of D.C. from having no authority over their own National Guard units in preparing for and responding to extraordinary threats to public safety; and

WHEREAS, D.C. is a historically Black city, and if admitted as a state would be the only plurality Black state, raising the appearance that the unique resistance to D.C. statehood is related to our shameful national history of unequal treatment of Black and other Americans of color; and

WHEREAS, The elected representatives of the people of D.C. have repeatedly petitioned Congress to become

the 51st state, most recently in 2016, with the expressed desire to become the "Douglass Commonwealth," in honor of historic abolitionist Frederick Douglass; and

WHEREAS, When the DC Council reviewed the work of that most recent statehood commission in preparation for the final vote authorizing the constitution and proposed boundaries, they concluded their report with the following: "Statehood is the only practical way that District citizens can participate in a fully democratic government as part of the United States. It is the only way to ensure that our local government will never be subject to a shutdown because of Congress' quibbling over purely federal matters. It is the only way to give District residents local elected representatives to enact purely local laws that will not be subject to national debates over divisive social issues. It is the only way to create a justice system that is representative of, and sensitive to, our community values. Statehood is the only way to give residents a full, guaranteed, and irrevocable voice in the Congress of the United States- the same voice enjoyed by all other citizens across the country. Statehood is the most practical solution to right the historical wrong of denying voting rights to citizens of the District and to guarantee the right to local self-governance."; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Does hereby call upon the United States Congress to admit Washington, District of Columbia as the 51st state in our Union.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the Congress as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.