

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM  
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2004**

**VOTING REPRESENTATION IN CONGRESS**

**TESTIMONY BY  
BETSY W. WERRONEN, CHAIRMAN  
DC REPUBLICAN COMMITTEE**

I am Betsy Werronen, Chairman of the DC Republican Committee. Thank you very much for the opportunity to come before the Committee on Government Reform today. On behalf of the members of the DC Republican Committee, I speak in full support of Voting Rights for the people of the District of Columbia in the Congress of the United States.

The Republican Party has a proud heritage in support of voting rights for all Americans. We are still proudly the Party of Lincoln, who risked his Presidency and took this country to war in order to guarantee the rights of citizenship to all Americans. From Frederick Douglass, the former slave, abolitionist and suffrage advocate to Everett Dirksen, who sent to the floor the first Home Rule bill to be reported in the House in over 75 years. Republicans have continued to champion the right of all Americans to express their most fundamental democratic right: their vote. The 1948 Republican Platform at the insistence of our President's grandfather, Senator Prescott Bush, contained a plank calling for "self-government and national suffrage for the Nation's Capital." Republican Party Platforms from 1960 through 1976 supported Home Rule and DC voting representation; and I can assure you that the DC Delegation to the Republican National Convention in August will carry the fight for such a plank in this year's Platform. Historian Nelson Rimensnyder has done extensive work in this area and I would like to submit for the record his paper on "Republicans and DC Voting Rights: A Progressive Record Embracing the Best Principles of the Party."

The right for American citizens to vote should not be a Republican or Democrat issue. The bipartisan spirit that is exemplified here today shows that on issues of importance to the citizens of the District we can and will work together. Having our Mayor, our Council and the local Republican

Party united demonstrates how important this issue is to the people of the District, regardless of party.

I would like to briefly focus on the important principles that should guide the form of representation in Congress rather than the specific details of achieving such representation. Please keep in mind three important points.

- First, the residents of the District of Columbia are citizens of the United States and are entitled under the Constitution to the same rights and responsibilities as all other United States citizens. District Residents have uncomplainingly accepted our responsibilities, including the obligation to serve in the defense of our country and the obligation to pay taxes just like all other citizens. Correspondingly, we must have the right to voting representation in Congress just like all other citizens. It is the right thing to do. There is simply no defense for not granting this basic right.
- Second, we recognize that there are several options for granting citizens of the District of Columbia the voting representation in Congress that they are entitled to. These options range from granting the District a voting member in the House, voting members in the Senate, or even full Statehood, to participating in federal elections in Maryland and retrocession to the State of Maryland. Because the District of Columbia is a unique entity, set up by our Founding Fathers as a federal city, Congress can show creativity and practicality in implementing voting representation for the District of Columbia. As an important first step, we support the option of full voting rights for a Representative in the House of Representatives. Furthermore, we believe that this is the most achievable way to grant our citizens their rights and honor the principles and spirit of the Constitution.

We urge this Committee to aggressively pursue the goal of a full voting Representative in the U. S. House of Representatives and pledge to do all that we can to help achieve it.