

# LAW, JUSTICE, AND ETHICS (LJE)

Resolution LJE-22-01

## ENDING DISENFRANCHISEMENT IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

WHEREAS, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) has long sought equal voting rights for the District of Columbia and recognized its council as members of our organization, including passing resolution LJE-09-17 Voting Rights for the District of Columbia;

WHEREAS, the people living on the land that would eventually be designated as the District of Columbia were provided the right to vote for representation in Congress when the United States Constitution was ratified in 1788;

WHEREAS, the passage of the Organic Act of 1801 placed the District of Columbia under the exclusive authority of the United States Congress and abolished residents' right to vote for members of Congress and the President and Vice President of the United States; and

WHEREAS, residents of the District of Columbia were granted the right to vote for the President and Vice President through the passage of the Twenty-Third Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1961;

WHEREAS, as of 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau data estimates that the District of Columbia's population at approximately 689,545 residents is comparable to the populations of Wyoming (576,851), Vermont (643,077), Alaska (733,391), and North Dakota (779,094);

WHEREAS, residents of the District of Columbia share all the responsibilities of United States citizenship, including paying more federal taxes than residents of 22 states, serving on federal juries, and defending the United States as members of the United States armed forces in every war since the War for Independence; yet, they are denied full voting representation in Congress;

WHEREAS, the residents of the District of Columbia themselves have endorsed statehood for the District of Columbia and passed a District-wide referendum on November 8, 2016, which favored statehood by 86%;

WHEREAS, no other democratic nation denies the right of self-government, including participation in its national legislature, to the residents of its capital;

WHEREAS, the residents of the District of Columbia lack full democracy, equality, and citizenship enjoyed by the residents of the 50 states;

WHEREAS, the United States Congress has interfered repeatedly with the District of Columbia's limited self-government by enacting laws that affect the District of Columbia's expenditure of its locally-raised tax revenue; this includes barring the usage of locally-raised revenue, thus violating the fundamental principle that states and local governments are best suited to enact legislation that represents the will of their citizens;

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WHEREAS, although the District of Columbia has passed consecutive balanced budgets since FY 1997, it still faces the possibility of being shut down yearly because of Congressional deliberations over the federal budget;

WHEREAS, in the 117th Congress, District of Columbia Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and Delaware U.S. Senator Tom Carper introduced H.R. 51 and S. 51, the Washington, D.C. Admission Act, that provides that the State of Washington, D.C. would have all the rights of citizenship as taxpaying American citizens, including two Senators and at least one House member; and

WHEREAS, The United Nations Human Rights Committee has called on the United States Congress to address the District of Columbia's lack of political equality, and the Organization of American States has declared the disenfranchisement of the District of Columbia residents a violation of its charter agreement to which the United States is a signatory.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Black Caucus of State Legislators (NBCSL) urge the members of the United States Congress to enact federal legislation granting statehood to the people of Washington, D.C.;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NBCSL supports admitting Washington, D.C. into the Union as a state of the United States of America with all the rights and privileges granted to every other state; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and other federal and state government officials and agencies as appropriate.

**SPONSOR: Representative Kam Buckner (IL)**

**Committee of Jurisdiction: Law, Justice, and Ethics (LJE) Policy Committee**

**Ratified in Plenary Session: December 2, 2021**

**Ratification certified by: Representative Billy Mitchell (GA), NBCSL President**