

September 18, 2019

Committee on Oversight and Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cummings, Ranking Member Jordan and Members of the House
Committee on Oversight and Reform:

On behalf of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), I write to express NARFE's support for H.R. 51, the Washington, D.C. Admission Act, which would extend statehood to most of the territory of the current District of Columbia. Statehood would ensure that the residents of the District of Columbia, including tens of thousands of federal employees and annuitants, have the right of self-government and full voting representation in Congress like all other Americans do.

Self-government, including proper representation, is a bedrock principle upon which our nation was founded, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. That founding document boldly identifies self-government as the guarantor of our unalienable rights – life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness: “That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”

Yet, for the past 218 years, American citizens living in the District of Columbia have not had the right to self-government enjoyed by those living in the 50 states. They are instead subjected to congressional overreach, wherein Congress holds the power to amend or deny funding (paid by local taxes) or even overturn laws passed by the local elected government of Washington, DC. Even worse, none of the more than 700,000 residents of the District of Columbia have any voting representation in the very Congress that holds power to govern them – both locally and nationally.

There are 141,514 active federal employees working in the District of Columbia, many of whom live there, and 44,014 District of Columbia residents who are federal annuitants. These men and women have served our nation with distinction, yet are not afforded the same rights and privileges to self-government as the citizens they have served. It is past time they are.

H.R. 51 corrects a longstanding blight on America's democracy by admitting the District of Columbia to the Union, thereby granting its citizens the ability to control their own local governance, along with two Senators and one Representative in Congress. The new state would exclude certain territory for the purpose of maintaining the seat of the federal government. The federal government would still retain control of its relatively small footprint while granting residents of the newly admitted state the rights that are principle to our country.

Statehood requires only a simple majority vote in each chamber of Congress and the president's signature. All states are admitted on an equal footing, and statehood is the only form of self-government that Congress cannot amend or take away. The time has come for Congress to exercise its authority and correct the inequity that has been placed on the residents of the District of Columbia.

For these reasons, I urge you to support the Washington, D.C. Admission Act to correct this longstanding injustice. Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you have any questions or comments, please contact NARFE's Staff Vice President, Advocacy Jessica Klement at 571-483-1264 or jklement@narfe.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Thomas', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Ken Thomas
National President