

Harry Wingo Testimony  
Before the House of Representatives Oversight and Reform Committee  
H.R. 51, "The Washington, D.C. Admission Act"  
March 22, 2021

***The views expressed are my own and do not reflect the official policy or position of my employer, the National Defense University, the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.***

Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, Congresswoman Norton, and other Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 51, the "Washington, D.C. Admission Act", which if enacted would admit the District into the Union on an equal footing with the other States in all respects.

I urge the Congress to grant full citizenship to the 712,000 residents of Washington, D.C., and to consider why the 30,000 veterans who live in D.C. are particularly deserving of D.C. Statehood. D.C. veterans have volunteered to give their very lives in defense of this Nation -- and many have paid that ultimate price, even though they have been disenfranchised. Today, I am humbled to speak on behalf of these Patriots, these sons and daughters of Washington who have served, fought and died in defense of the freedom they have too long been denied.

I am Harry Wingo, a Washington, D.C. born, current citizen and resident of Washington and a third generation military veteran. Military service runs in my family.

My father, Harry Wingo, Sr., is a 91-year old Army veteran who rose from the rank of private to be a Chief Warrant Officer Three with 35 years of service. His father, my grandfather, Harry Fisherman Wingo, also served in the Army, and survived the horrors of trench warfare and poison gas in World War I. While my mother's father, William Smith, did not wear a military uniform, he was a volunteer police officer in Prince George's County, Maryland.

After graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1988, I was an active duty Navy SEAL officer for over six years, serving first at a mini-sub team, SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team ONE, and then finishing my active duty with Special Boat UNIT TWO SIX, working out of the Panama Canal Zone and traveling throughout Latin America in support of our Nation's counter-drug efforts. While I was granted an honorable discharge long before the crushing operational cadence of the global war on terror, as an active duty Frogman in the 1990s, I went in harm's way.

As a veteran, I signed a blank check, committing my life to support and defend this great Nation. And yet, as a resident of the District, I have no voting Member of Congress who can represent my voice when decisions are made on issues like going to war, or properly caring for wounded veterans. Accordingly, I strongly urge the Congress to vote for D.C. statehood, something that so many of Washington's 30,000 veterans also demand.

D.C. veterans are denied the basic rights enjoyed by other Americans, despite our sacrifice. No taxation without representation has been a worthy rallying cry for D.C. statehood. For D.C. veterans, we have an additional note: No sacrifice without representation.

No American should be denied the benefits of federalism, the power (and responsibility) of participation in both local and national governance -- the Republic that Benjamin Franklin told the American People they had achieved, if they could keep it. In D.C., we know that we can keep full Democracy, if only given the chance. The desire for statehood burns even stronger in the hearts of D.C. veterans, having devoted our lives to the defense of the U.S. Constitution, the defense of our own families, and *all American families*.

Going back to the time of the American Revolution, military veterans from Washington have fought and died in every war. D.C. veterans have paid, and continue to pay the ultimate price. D.C. veterans have returned home from military service to be denied the full measure of citizenship they selflessly protected for others.

According to the Congressional Research Service Report, "American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics", dated July 29, 2020 (CRS Report, No. RL 32492), the following deaths and casualties befell fighting men and women from Washington:

**World War I: 202 deaths;** 773 casualties (*includes, Battle Deaths, Wounded in Action (WIA), Missing in Action (MIA), Prisoner of War (POW)*).

**World War II, Army and Air Force Honor List of Dead and Missing: 1,106 Killed in Action;** 157 Died of Wounds; 10 Died of Injuries; 1,487 Died Non Battle; 187 Finding of Death; 82 Missing; 3,029 Total Casualties.

**World War II, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard: 343 Combat Dead;** 10 Prison Camp Dead; 810 Total Casualties.

**Korean War: 158 Total Deaths** (*more than 10 States: Alaska (10); Delaware (45); Idaho (131); Montana (137); Nevada (37); New Hampshire (137); Rhode Island (149); Utah (141); Vermont (94); Wyoming (60)*).

**Vietnam War, 242 Total Deaths** (*more than 10 States: Alaska (57); Delaware (122); Idaho (217); Nevada (149); New Hampshire (226); North Dakota (199); Rhode Island (209); South Dakota (192); Vermont (100); Wyoming (119)*).

The casualties from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) are available online from the Defense Casualty Analysis System:

**OIF, 5 "Names of the Fallen":** Darryl Thomas Dent (Army National Guard); Randy Lewis Johnson, Jr. (Army Active Duty); Gregory Edward MacDonald (Marine Corps Reserve); Keisha Marie Morgan (Army Active Duty); Kevin Michael Shea (Army Active Duty).

**OEF\*, 4 "Names of the Fallen":** William John Cahir (Marine Corps Reserve); Paul Wayne Kimbrough (Army Reserve); Darrell Cornelius Lewis (Army Active Duty); Jerome David Miller, Jr. (Air Force Reserve). (\* *as of March 19, 2021*).

D.C. Veterans were, thankfully, spared combat deaths in the Persian Gulf war, but so too were four States: Nebraska, Nevada, South Dakota, and Vermont. (CRS Report, pp. 40-42). I share this grim math out of respect, and to underscore my plea that Congress honor the sacrifice of the brave battle-fallen of Washington with the inalienable rights they died for. The official sources tell of 2,060 patriots who gave their very lives for liberties they never themselves enjoyed. This is injustice and it is wrong. Please, help to right this wrong by voting for H.R. 51.

Of the 712,000 citizens of D.C., over 30,000 are military veterans. These men and women are Patriots who stepped forward to defend the full rights of their fellow citizens around the Nation. Do we not deserve the same rights, to the full extent, as our fellow Americans?

Before this hearing, I listened to the powerful stories of fellow D.C. veterans, patriots who urged me to remind the Members of Congress of the many men and women of Washington who have died fighting for the full freedom and equality enjoyed by other Americans, but who have been denied those same inalienable rights. I spoke with members of Veterans United for D.C. Statehood. Led by D.C. veteran Hector Rodriguez, this group has long fought for statehood. Please search YouTube for "Veterans United for DC Statehood Message to Congress", and you will see the group's powerful message delivered just days ago, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMC5aFIPSEE>.

I spoke with Ms. Antoinette V. Scott, a D.C. veteran and shero who volunteered and was wounded in combat. Ms. Scott, an American nurse and soldier, is the first female resident of D.C. to receive a Purple Heart, awarded for her service with the D.C. Army National Guard during Operation Iraqi Freedom, where she drove her team to safety after being wounded in an improvised explosive device attack. By the way, Ms. Scott is a graduate of Dunbar High School, the alma mater of both Congresswoman Norton, and the late great Admiral Wesley A. Brown, the first African American graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy.

Speaking of Annapolis, consider the story of another D.C. veteran, U.S. Navy Admiral (retired) Cecil D. Haney. From 2012 to 2013, Admiral Haney served as Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, the largest component of the world's largest fleet. After that, Admiral Haney became Commander, U.S. Strategic Command, where he served until 2016. Admiral Haney, yet another example of one of D.C.'s veterans, followed his colleague and fellow Washingtonian, Admiral J. Paul Reason, to become the *second* African-American Naval Officer promoted to four-star Admiral, the Navy's highest peacetime rank.

Before this hearing, I also spoke with another son of D.C., Dr. Howard Gambrill Clark, a battle-tested Marine who during his combat deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq wondered why some Members of Congress supported giving residents of Baghdad and Kabul a right to vote for their national legislature but denied this very same right to Americans, much less military veterans, in our own capital. Among the D.C. veterans by whom I am inspired, I also count lawyer Kerwin Miller, another Naval Academy graduate, and a proud D.C. patriot who served and continues to serve the community.

In the late 1960s, my father bought a home near the Shrimp Boat, a landmark in Southeast D.C., and found a home at Tabernacle Baptist Church. My extended family lived nearby, in the

Northeast part of the city, and a few family members lived in Northwest, on the east side of Rock Creek Park. That world was one that we continued to be part of even after moving to Maryland, including most Sundays after church when we would visit family in D.C.. On Saturdays, my mother took my sister and I shopping at D.C. thrift stores, to make ends meet.

As a child, I did not often come to the part of D.C. in which Congress convenes. After my military service, however, I would work in the core of the federal zone: as a staffer to the late, great Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, a veteran of the “Flying Tigers” in World War II, and as a Special Counsel at the Federal Communications Commission, when it was run by Colin Powell’s son, Michael Powell. This was also the part of Washington where I clerked for another great veteran, the late Honorable James Robertson, for whom I clerked when he was on the bench for the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia, and who was one of the judges on the FISA court. Judge Robertson was in the Navy, like me.

That service as a civilian in the Congress, in an independent agency, and in the federal courts, all in the core federal zone of the District, came long after my childhood days spent with family in Washington’s tree-lined neighborhoods in Southeast, Northeast, and some of Northwest, D.C., east of Rock Creek Park. I would come to learn the other parts after attending Yale Law School, after marrying my wife who was born and grew up in the Northwest, D.C. area around Blessed Sacrament church along Western Avenue, near Rock Creek.

I’m blessed to have three daughters. One is set to graduate from Georgia Tech with a degree in Chemical Engineering, and my youngest two are growing up in what seems a world away from where marble buildings contain the corridors where the three branches of the federal government, the Congress, the Executive, and the Judiciary do the People’s work. The People are in Washington, D.C., as well. The Patriots who are among the one-percent who choose to serve are also in this territory, this District of Columbia that should be a State.

Congresswoman Norton, again, I thank you for your tireless leadership on the march towards D.C. statehood. I would also like to recognize the efforts of Mayor Muriel Bowser, who selected me in 2015 to be the Chairperson of the Advisory Board on Veterans Affairs for the District of Columbia, a role that I was honored to fulfill.

I am not before you today to discuss the details of Constitutional law, although as a graduate of the Yale Law School, like Congresswoman Norton, I would stand ready to accept that task. Today, I’m honored to simply share what I know so many D.C. veterans deeply believe -- statehood should be granted to Washington.

I trust that upon hearing today’s testimony, and reflecting on the inalienable rights that some Members continue to deny their fellow Americans, much less military veterans, you will afford the fundamental right of D.C. statehood to those who have earned it and who will continue to earn it with their very lives.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to any questions you may have.