

**Statement of Congressman Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)**  
**Committee on Oversight and Government Accountability**  
***Overdue Oversight of the Capital City: Part I***  
**Wednesday, March 29, 2023**

I approach the subject of home rule as a former local government official having served on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for 14 years, including five as chairman. I have consistently supported autonomy for the District and would argue Congress' actions have actually had a deleterious effect on the District and its residents. D.C.'s lack of autonomy affects the entire National Capital Region, especially the thousands of my constituents who are civil servants and work in the District. Congress should not interject itself into local self-governance issues to silence the voices of 700,000 fellow Americans who live in Washington, D.C. I hope the irony of this situation is not lost on those who support the conservative principles of limited government and states' rights. Let me remind my colleagues of what my fellow Virginian, James Madison, said in the Federalist Papers, Number 43, with respect to the intent of the Congressional authority. In referring to the residents of this federal District, Madison said "they will have had their voice in the election of the government which is to exercise authority over them; as a municipal legislature for local purposes."

Since our nation's own fight for independence, self-representation has been a core tenant of our country's system of government. Today, D.C. has both demonstrated its effective capability to manage its own affairs, and clearly met all of Congress's historic requirements to gain statehood. In the past, Congress has considered three factors when determining a territory's aptitude to join the Union. One, do the residents have a commitment to self-government; two, do the residents support statehood; and three does the proposed state have sufficient resources and population to support itself and its share of the costs to be part of the federal government. First, District residents have already demonstrated their commitment to gain statehood. In 2016, 478,688 D.C. residents cast their vote in the Washington, D.C., statehood referendum. This turnout rate almost exactly matches that of the 2016 Presidential election, demonstrating the question's priority on the minds of D.C. residents. Second, the referendum vote found that more than 85% of residents voted in favor of statehood demonstrating underlining voters' commitment to achieving statehood. Third, the District's population is greater than that of two states, Vermont and Wyoming, and its \$16.9 billion annual budget exceeds that of 16 state governments. Additionally, residents of the District pay more in taxes to the federal government than 22 other states, three of which include North Dakota, New Mexico and Vermont, all who are represented on this very Committee. D.C. clearly more than exceeds the sufficient resources and population to support itself and the federal government

There is no more basic exercise of local authority than protecting public safety. But that is the very subject of Republicans' latest effort to force the will of Congress on the duly elected local representatives of the District of Columbia. The resolution Disapproving the action of the District of Columbia Council in approving the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022 (H.J. Res. 42) is meant to score cheap political points at the expense of D.C. and its residents.

So why do Republicans support “No taxation without representation,” except for those that live within D.C.? The answer is that H.J. Res. 42 is just another opportunity for the majority’s insistent projection campaign and attack on Democrats. H.J. Res. 42 would repeal an unanimously agreed upon D.C. bill and is being used as a prop to claim Democrats are soft on crime, when in reality, Democratic-run cities employ more police officers and invest more money on policing per capita than Republican-run cities. In 2022, D.C. was the city with the largest per capita police force in the country with 543 officers per 100,000 residents. In comparison, a Republican-run city in Chairman Comer’s state of Kentucky, only employs 198 officers per 100,000 residents. Additionally, Washington D.C. spent \$752 per resident on policing, which is almost three times as much as Lexington, Kentucky, which spent \$252 per resident on policing. Lastly, Speaker McCarthy’s own district of Kern County, California has had the highest murder rate in the state for the last six years. Moreover, since 2000, Trump-voting states have had higher murder rates than Biden-voting states every single year and in 2020, murder rates in Trump-voting states were more than 40% higher than in Biden-voting states. Violent crime should be a bipartisan priority for Congress.

Today’s legislation will do nothing to make communities safer. As a five-time cosponsor of legislation for D.C. statehood, I urge my colleagues not to support this resolution and instead refocus their attention on giving D.C. residents the same rights as their fellow Americans.