

**“American Confidence in Elections:
The Path to Election Integrity in the District of Columbia”
Joint Hearing with the Committee on Oversight and Accountability and
Committee on House Administration
Wednesday, June 7, 2023
Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (VA-11)**

For years, Republicans have pushed for voter suppression laws across the country. They know they cannot win on ideas, so they resort to making it harder for certain voters to vote. Just last week, the Republican-led legislature in Texas passed a law that would nullify any city ordinance or regulation that conflicts with existing state policy to address an alleged patchwork of regulations. In practice, this law largely only affects three or four mostly Democratic cities, exposing Republicans’ partisan motives. According to the Voting Rights lab, this year Republicans have pushed to pass 18 bills across 10 states that will add new restrictions to voting or election administration. Alternatively, Democrats have advocated to expand ballot access through increased mail voting, added new forms of acceptable identification to vote, and expanded early voting. This year, Democrats fought to pass 28 laws in 17 states and the District of Columbia to increase people’s access to vote. Today’s hearing is Republicans’ latest attempt to intrude upon local self-governance and disenfranchise people who are not likely to vote for them.

This is to say nothing of the Big Lie the Republican party tells about the 2020 election. They scream “election integrity” when they really mean, “next time, we will cheat to win.” Now Republicans want to inject this poison into the democratic bloodstream of the nation’s capital. Who better to administer the injection than the Republicans on this committee? Jim Jordan who tweeted “Democrats are trying to steal the election, after the election” in response to the Supreme Court’s ruling to allow mail-in ballots received up to three days after election day in Pennsylvania to be counted. Paul Gosar who stated “I support and agree with the former President. Unprecedented fraud requires unprecedented cure” in response to Trump’s call to terminate the election rules in the Constitution. Andy Biggs who argued that Pennsylvania’s elections were “an utter disaster, and really your immediate remedy is to basically nullify Pennsylvania’s election.” Lauren Boebert who tweeted about the 2020 Presidential election, “I am very tired of hearing about fixing election fraud going forward. “An election just happened. There was fraud. Fix that one first!” Marjorie Taylor Greene who claimed, “there was MASS voter fraud on a scale that should terrify every American regardless of political party.” Anna Paulina Luna who said, “I believe that President Trump won that election, and I do believe that voter fraud occurred.”

Having served as a member on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for 14 years, including five years as Chairman, my background as a former local government official has granted me insight and appreciation for home rule. This experience provided me with an understanding of the importance and significance of empowering local communities to govern themselves. Throughout my career, I have consistently advocated for greater autonomy for the District and firmly believe that the recent anti-D.C. Republican led resolutions jeopardizing both the District and its residents. Furthermore, federal overreach into D.C. hurts the entire National Capital Region and the countless constituents who commute into the District to serve their country as members of our civil service.

It is of utmost importance that Congress refrain from interfering in matters of local self-governance. Republicans should respect the voices of the 700,000 fellow Americans who proudly call Washington, D.C. their home and abide by their own self-proclaimed conservative principles of limited government and states’ rights. Allow me to remind my colleagues of the words expressed by James Madison, a fellow Virginian. In the Federalist Papers, Number 43, Madison wrote that citizens in the federal district “will have had their voice in the election of the government which is to exercise authority over them.” It is clear that Madison believed D.C.

authorities should remain accountable to their constituents through local democratic elections like the seat of the new nation.

Since the inception of our nation's struggle for independence, the principle of self-representation has stood as a fundamental pillar of our governmental system. Today, Washington, D.C. has demonstrated its capability to effectively govern its own affairs and has met all the historical requirements set by Congress for attaining statehood. Congress has traditionally considered three key factors when evaluating a territory's suitability for joining the Union. These factors include the residents' commitment to self-governance, their support for statehood, and the proposed state's adequate resources and population to sustain itself and contribute to federal government costs.

First and foremost, the residents of the District have unequivocally displayed their commitment to achieving statehood. In the 2016 Washington, D.C. statehood referendum, a staggering 478,688 residents cast their votes, nearly matching the turnout rate of the 2016 Presidential election. This remarkable turnout underscores the deep significance of the statehood question in the minds of D.C. residents.

Secondly, the referendum revealed an overwhelming mandate, with over 85% of residents voting in favor of statehood. This strong and unwavering support from the voters demonstrates a clear consensus and determination to achieve this goal.

Third, Washington, D.C.'s population surpasses that of two existing states, Vermont and Wyoming, while its annual budget of \$19.7 billion exceeds that of 19 other state governments. Furthermore, D.C. residents contribute more in taxes to the federal government than 22 other states, including North Dakota, New Mexico, and Vermont, all of which are represented on this very Committee. These facts underscore that Washington, D.C. not only meets the necessary requirements but surpasses them in terms of resources and population, ensuring its ability to sustain itself and contribute to the functioning of the federal government.

Safeguarding voters' rights and ensuring public safety are essential responsibilities entrusted to local authorities. However, these very issues are at risk as Republicans make their latest effort to impose Congress's will on the duly elected local representatives of the District of Columbia.

The resolutions disapproving the actions of the District of Columbia Council in adopting the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2022 (H.J. Res. 24), the Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022 (H.J. Res. 26), and the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Amendment Act of 2022 (H.J. Res. 42) serve only to score political points at the expense of D.C. and its residents. It has barely been two months, and Republicans have already called for a third hearing to meddle with the sovereignty of the District of Columbia's government. This time around, their focus falls on permanent residents' right, codified by law, to vote in the D.C. Mayoral, Council, State Board of Education, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, and Attorney General elections.

This latest hearing calls into question: Why do Republicans champion the principle of "No taxation without representation," except when it comes to those residing in D.C.? The answer lies in the Republicans' willingness to exploit D.C., a city with an almost 50 percent Black population, as a convenient punching bag for political gain, irrespective of how hypocritical it may appear. And when they tell you this is not about race, you can be sure it is in fact about race.

The Big Lie about the 2020 election is now Republican party dogma. Ironically as they claim that the 2020 election was invalid, they seek to invalidate the election integrity of our nation's capital.