

Tommy Wells Biography

Since joining the D.C. Council in 2006, Tommy Wells has won support throughout Washington for his fundamental goal: creating a livable and walkable city for all. He is a passionate student of cutting-edge solutions--who brings the skill to forge the kind of collaboration that translates great ideas into real improvements in our quality of life.

Tommy works with the leadership and citizens in every corner of Ward 6--from the Southwest Waterfront to the H Street Corridor, from Capitol Hill to Shaw--to guide development that focuses on neighborhood needs. He has championed the next generation of public transit--including streetcar lines, expansion of the D.C. Circulator, and improvements in overall bus service. He has brought Ward 6 residents back to their neighborhood grade schools and is working to reinvent our middle schools and Eastern High. And he crafted a landmark bill to charge a nominal fee on disposable bags--prompting thousands of D.C. residents to curb the use of bags that choke the Anacostia River, establishing a fund to clean up the river, and creating a model for other jurisdictions nationwide.

As the Chair for the Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary, Tommy is focused on working with police leaders to increase the number of police officers on our neighborhood patrols, develop and support smarter public safety initiatives, and ensure safe streets in every community.

As the former Chair of the Council's Committee on Libraries, Parks, Recreation and Planning, Tommy expanded the scope, staffing and programming of the city's recreational space and parks throughout the city. He also working with the DC Public Library to support its critical role of providing employment and education opportunities for all residents, in addition to ensuring the budget supports our neighborhood branches and expands the books and materials available.

As the former Chair of the Committee on Public Works and Transportation and member of the Board of Directors of WMATA, Tommy worked to improve transit connections between neighborhoods, build on alternative transit options, and put a focus on pedestrian access.

As the former Chair of the Council's Committee on Human Service, Tommy led housing policy reform through the innovative Housing First program, a proven way to get homeless people back on track by providing a stable place to live. He worked to improve services for D.C. youth in foster care, lending focused oversight that earned the District its highest-ever performance ranking from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. And under Tommy's oversight the Department of Youth Rehabilitation achieved reduced recidivism among the juveniles in its custody.

But Tommy began advancing positive change in our city decades before his election to the City Council. He started his Washington career in 1983 as a social worker in the D.C. foster care system, where he spurred and led a successful class action lawsuit, LaShawn v. Barry, to address the city's failure to protect children in its care. In 1991, he took the helm of the D.C. Consortium for Child Welfare, where he was a force for creating neighborhood based-family service collaboratives that coordinate the delivery of city and nonprofit resources. He was the architect

of a groundbreaking program to match foster families with children affected by HIV/AIDS and also led the drive to create the D.C. Family Court--which produced a 300 percent increase the number of foster children adopted into permanent homes every year.

During his 15 years with the Consortium, Tommy also served as an ANC Commissioner from 1994 to 2000 and a member of the D.C. Board of Education, representing Wards 5 and 6, from 2000 to 2006. In a position of notoriously limited authority, Tommy negotiated the creation of full-day programs for 3-year-olds in several neighborhood schools and spearheaded strict rules for immunizing 20,000 D.C. students--resulting in one of the nation's highest immunization rates.

Tommy is the former chair of the board for Jan's Tutoring House and the previous chair of the Local Government Advisory Committee for the Chesapeake Bay. He graduated from the Columbus School of Law at Catholic University in 1991 and earned a master's degree in social work from the University of Minnesota in 1983. Since 1988 he has been married to Barbara Wells, a writer and arts enthusiast who is a tutor for Jan's Tutoring House and a judge for the Helen Hayes Awards.