



**National
Urban League**

Marc H. Morial
President and CEO

80 Pine Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10005

Phone 212 558 5300
Efax 646 568 2185

www.nul.org
presidentoffice@nul.org

**Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.**

September 16, 2019

Honorable Elijah Cummings
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cummings and Ranking Member Jordan:

As President and CEO of the National Urban League, and on behalf of its 90 affiliates representing 300 communities in 36 states and the District of Columbia, we are pleased to extend our full support for the *Washington, DC Admission Act* (H.R.51) that would finally bring statehood status to the residents of the District of Columbia.

Our nation can no longer tolerate being the only democratic country in the world that denies full democracy rights to its citizens living in the nation's capital. This is an apparent violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a treaty to which the United States has been a signatory since 1977. Democracy begins at home. More than 700,000 American citizens live in the District of Columbia. Washingtonians pay federal taxes, fight and die in wars, serve on juries, yet have no vote in Congress – truly taxation without representation.

Contrary to critics of DC statehood, the *Washington, DC Admission Act* is constitutional. A recent analysis of H.R. 51 by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) finds that:

The Washington, D.C. Admission Act is constitutionally permissible. The Act would admit most of the District of Columbia's currently populated areas into the Union as a new state, preserving a small area consisting of federal buildings (e.g., White House, Capitol, U.S. Supreme Court Building) as a redrawn federal district.

Critics—including the Department of Justice under several presidential administrations— have raised concerns about the constitutionality of admitting the District of Columbia as a state through an act of Congress, rather than by a constitutional amendment. However, H.R. 51/S. 631 is a valid and defensible exercise of congressional authority. It complies with the District and Federal Enclaves Clause, the Admission Clause, and the Twenty-Third Amendment.¹

Other noted constitutional scholars, such as Republican constitutional scholar and practitioner Viet Dinh, a former U.S. Assistant Attorney General for Legal Policy in the George W. Bush administration, have asserted the constitutionality of DC statehood.

¹American Civil Liberties Union, August 12, 2019,
https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/memorandum_re_d.c._statehood_8.13.2019_final.pdf

The National Urban League believes that H.R. 51 will finally bring full democracy to every single citizen of the District of Columbia. It is more than 200 years overdue!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "marc morial", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Marc H. Morial
President and CEO
National Urban League

Cc: Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton