



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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ACTION ALERT

DATE: April 9, 2009
TO: Concerned Parties
FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

Voting Rights Bill Stalled in the House **BILL TO GIVE THE RESIDENTS OF D.C. REPRESENTATION IN CONGRESS** **IS HUNG UP ON ISSUES OF GUN VIOLENCE AND SELF RULE**

THE ISSUE:

Legislation that passed the U.S. Senate (S. 160, the ***District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act***) earlier this year to give the residents of the District of Columbia voting representation in Congress is currently stalled in the House over the issues making guns more easily available and self-rule. Specifically, just prior to final passage by the Senate, an amendment was adopted which would override all of the city's gun violence prevention laws. Many of these laws have been in place for almost 30 years and were enacted through the democratic process by the residents of the District of Columbia. They affect only D.C. residents who have consistently supported sane, sensible laws to ban handguns bought after 1976, require that registered firearms bought before 1976 must be kept unloaded and disassembled, or with the trigger locked and outlawed military-styled assault weapons altogether.

In addition to our strong support of H.R. 157 the ***District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act*** (the House companion to S. 160) the NAACP also strongly opposes any move to repeal the District's self-enacted gun safety measures. While some may disagree with these laws, it is clear that they were enacted democratically by officials who were duly elected by the citizens of the District of Columbia and that they continue to enjoy the support of the majority of the people who live under them. The mayor and the city council, all of whom were acting on behalf of their constituents, drafted, debated and finally enacted this legislation as a means of protecting their constituents, their families, and law enforcement officers. The fact that these laws have remained on the books for more than 28 years is significant; the people of the District of Columbia, faced with unacceptably high rates of death by firearm (169 in DC in 2001) and the huge human and economic costs associated with gun violence (the closing of DC General hospital, which was overwhelmed by uninsured citizens coming in with gunshot wounds) have continued to support a variety of sane and sensible gun control laws to stem the tide of violence.

So we must now urge the House of Representatives to support H.R. 157, the *District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act* and to oppose any amendments that would undermine or ignore the democratic will of the residents of the District of Columbia, especially as they relate to gun violence. Despite the fact that they pay federal taxes, serve on juries and defend our Nation in times of war like most other Americans, the residents of the District of Columbia are barred from having voting representation on the floor of the U.S. House or Senate. This modern-day example of "taxation without representation" is contrary to everything that this nation is founded on. This means that more than half a million people, more than 57% of whom are African American (with Caucasians making up just over 30% of the population and 8.5% of the residents claiming Hispanic background), are paying money to and dying for a government in which they have no real say. It also means that the federal government is receiving and spending \$4 billion without having to account for it.

More...

THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:

Contact your Representative and **URGE HIM / HER TO SUPPORT AND VOTE FOR H.R. 157, THE District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009**, and to oppose all amendments that are contrary to the democratically expressed desires of D.C. residents. To contact your Representative, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Representative in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to his or her office. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Representative, send them to:
The Honorable (name of Representative)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

**A SAMPLE
LETTER IS
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Representative's office (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for the fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Representative, go to www.house.gov, and click on "Write Your Representative" (on the left hand side, just under "find your Representative"). This will help you identify who your congressman is and how to contact him/her.

THE MESSAGE

- Despite the fact that they pay federal taxes, serve on juries and defend our Nation in times of war like most other Americans, the residents of the District of Columbia are barred from having voting representation on the floor of the U.S. House or Senate. This modern-day example of "taxation without representation" is contrary to everything that this nation is founded on.
- This means that more than half a million people, more than 57% of whom are African American (with Caucasians making up just over 30% of the population and 8.5% of the residents claiming Hispanic background), are paying money to and dying for a government in which they have no say.
- **The NAACP strongly urges that Representatives support passage of the legislation and oppose any amendments that are contrary to the democratically-expressed will of D.C. residents.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!
If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

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Sample Letter

(date)

The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: CONGRESSIONAL VOTING RIGHTS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Dear Representative _____;

As your constituent, I am outraged that the residents of the District of Columbia do not have voting representation in Congress, despite the fact that they pay federal income taxes, serve in the military and on federal juries. This is wrong, and contrary to everything our nation's forefathers fought and died for over 225 years ago. I therefore urge you, in the strongest terms possible, to support granting Congressional representation to the residents of the District of Columbia. Specifically, I am asking you to support the "***District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act, H.R. 157***". Furthermore, I strongly urge you to oppose any amendments which may impose Congressional will on the residents of D.C., especially if it is contrary to the democratically-expressed desire of those residents. This bill is an important first step in correcting this insult and aberration to the institution of democracy.

The residents of the District of Columbia – our nation's capitol and to many the seat of democracy – are the only Americans who pay full federal income taxes yet are not allowed voting representation in either the U.S. House or the U.S. Senate. This is contrary to the basic tenets of the democracy upon which this nation was founded, and is, quite simply, morally wrong. As a result of this law, over 500,000 people, over 57% of whom are African American, 30% are Caucasian and 8.5% are Hispanic, pay \$4 billion in federal taxes each year, yet have no say in how that money is spent.

By supporting H.R. 157 you will be letting the residents of the District of Columbia -- as well as your constituents back home – know that you support and believe in democracy for all Americans. I hope that you agree with me that this egregious error needs to be rectified, and that you will support congressional representation for the men, women and children in D.C. Please contact me as soon as possible to let me know what you are doing to expedite passage of this legislation and what I can do to help.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and
remember to include your address)