



Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

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SUPPORT A "CLEAN" RULE ON DC VOTING RIGHTS

March 13, 2009

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), the nation's oldest, largest, and most diverse civil and human rights coalition, we urge you to support a closed rule providing for a clean, up-or-down vote on H.R. 157, the "District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009" ("DC VRA"). If the Rules Committee adopts a clean rule, the floor vote on the rule will be recorded in the LCCR voting record for the 111th Congress.

LCCR has never scored a rule. We do so with respect to the DC VRA because we strongly believe that a bill to expand a fundamental civil right should not be hijacked by controversial unrelated issues. Opponents of the legislation have been using the ongoing Congressional debate as an opportunity to undermine the very democracy that the DC VRA is meant to foster. Without even a single vote on behalf of DC residents, the Senate voted to overturn a purely local ordinance that regulates the possession of firearms in the District of Columbia – a move which, had it been attempted with respect to any other locality in the country, would have sparked incalculable outrage. Given the opportunity, opponents of the DC VRA appear willing to offer an equally-antidemocratic amendment in the House.

Given the diversity of our coalition, LCCR takes no position on the merits of the District of Columbia's firearms regulations. Where we stand united, however, is in the firm belief that the right to vote – and to have that vote count for something – is the most important civil and human right that Americans have. Any attempt by Congress to rewrite purely local laws with no input whatsoever from the residents who will live with the consequences, even in the constitutionally-unique District of Columbia, makes a mockery of this right and betrays the notion of government by the "consent of the governed." It is particularly troubling that opponents of the DC VRA would ignore one of the most important principles underlying the Constitution while, at the same time, clinging to a selective and overly-literal interpretation of its text.

Again, LCCR recognizes that Congress has special authority over the District of Columbia. We also understand that some in Congress take issue with the District's efforts to comply with the Supreme Court's recent ruling in *District of Columbia v. Heller*. We hope you can appreciate, however, that a debate over legislation to end the embarrassment of "taxation without representation" is the most inappropriate forum that Congress could possibly choose for revisiting the District's firearms laws.

"Equality In a Free, Plural, Democratic Society"



For these reasons, we urge you to support a “clean” rule governing the debate over H.R. 157. Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact LCCR Counsel Rob Randhava at 202-466-6058.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wade Henderson', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nancy Zirkin', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President