



1. The only people living in Washington, DC work for the government and the military.

FALSE. Federal officials represent a small proportion of DC's population. DC is home to nearly 600,000 people of all backgrounds, most of whom have lived there for over 20 years. Washington, DC has 120 vibrant neighborhoods, each having its own rich, distinct cultural heritage. People living in DC are teachers, nurses, firefighters, police officers, and small business owners.

2. DC citizens enjoy the same rights as other American citizens.

FALSE. Although they pay the highest per capita federal income taxes in the country, fight in America's wars, and serve on its juries, citizens of the District of Columbia have no voting representation in Congress. Also, Congress reviews and modifies DC's local budget, and has the power to repeal any DC law.

3. The Founding Fathers wanted to take away the rights of DC citizens.

FALSE. The founders were concerned about the rights of District citizens, but because getting approval for the federal Constitution was their first priority, they left open the possibility that future generations could address the inequity. Alexander Hamilton proposed to let DC residents vote with Maryland or Virginia until their population grew, at which time Congress would give DC voting representation. James Madison argued that DC should be given a legislature "for local purposes, derived from their own suffrages."

4. DC citizens don't pay federal or state taxes, and U.S. taxpayers pay for nearly everything.

FALSE. DC citizens pay higher per capita federal income taxes than any state. In addition, DC citizens pay "statelike," or District taxes, which are sent directly to Congress. Once Congress approves DC's budget, the money is appropriated back to DC. Congress restricts DC's ability to raise revenues, pays no taxes on the land it uses or exempts, and imposes added requirements on public services, such as the police force.

5. DC residents have more influence because they're closer to the President and Congress.

FALSE. In the age of global communications, proximity does not mean access. Most federal officials know more about their home districts or international affairs than DC issues. Few DC residents have privileges based on their proximity to power.

6. Most countries don't have voting rights for their capital city.

FALSE. Of all the capitals of democratic countries in the world, the U.S. is the only one where its capital district citizens cannot vote in the national legislature. The U.S. violates DC citizens' rights to equal suffrage under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was ratified in 1992.

7. Washington, DC is just a city, so it can't function like a state.

FALSE. DC is responsible for most functions of a city, county, and state. DC operates a District police force, a District school system, and DC is treated by the federal government as a state in more than 500 ways. The District's mayor has much in common with governors, and councilmembers have much in common with state legislators. Like states, DC has its own legal code, and its responsibilities include food and drug inspections, utility regulations, occupational licensure and vehicle inspections.

8. DC is too small to have representation.

FALSE. DC is 63 square miles, and has a larger population than Wyoming. All states - regardless of size - have equal representation in the Senate, whereas in the House of Representatives, representation is determined by population size. For example, California and Wyoming have two Senators each, but California has 53 Representatives while Wyoming has only one.

9. DC is treated differently because it's the capital, and it belongs to all Americans.

FALSE. By percentage, the federal government owns less of DC than of Nevada, Utah, Arkansas and Idaho. The area known as the National Capital Service Area, a very small portion of the District of Columbia, is home to Congress, the White House, the Supreme Court and Smithsonian museums. That land belongs to all Americans. However, DC's 120 neighborhoods belong to the people who live there.

10. DC citizens haven't worked hard to change their status.

FALSE. DC citizens have fought for full and equal rights since 1800. Each generation has written letters, protested, filed lawsuits, and attempted to change its second-class status. In 1961, a Constitutional Amendment granting DC the right to Presidential electors (equal to the smallest state) passed Congress and was approved by the states. In 1978, a Constitutional Amendment providing full representation in the House and Senate was passed by Congress but failed in 1985 when only 16 of the 38 required states ratified it. In 2009, the Senate passed the DC Voting Rights Act to provide representation in the House, but a noxious gun amendment killed the bill. District residents continue to fight for equal rights and full democracy.