



Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

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January 25, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

We congratulate you on your historic achievement in becoming the first woman to be elected Speaker of the House of Representatives after leading a successful effort by your party to win control of the House. We particularly appreciate your strong leadership last year that resulted in the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act in the 109th Congress.

You now have before you another voting rights bill of great importance that has long been a major priority for us. H.R. 328 would give a vote in the House of Representatives to the citizens of the District of Columbia, who outrank almost all the states in income taxes paid to the federal government, and who have always served in our nation's military. The Fair and Equal D.C. House Voting Rights Act would provide less than we have sought. However, we agree with District of Columbia citizens and their elected officials that this bill presents a rare opportunity that must be embraced this year and that it is not likely to come again soon. The pairing of two jurisdictions of different parties, each ripe for a vote at the same time, fits the pattern used to increase representation throughout our history. We are pleased that Utah and District officials have been willing to work closely together with welcome bipartisanship on the bill sponsored by Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton and Representative Tom Davis.

We believe that the right to representation in our national legislature must come with American citizenship regardless of race or other background. However, African Americans, who are central to our civil rights agenda, have formed the majority of the population in the nation's capital for many decades. The District of Columbia achieved a congressional delegate and partial self government only after its citizens were aided by the civil rights movement, including many of our organizations, who finally made the total absence of congressional representation and self government in the nation's capital a matter of national importance. In light of the long history of federally enforced segregation in the nation's capital until recent decades, and its majority African American population, the continued disenfranchisement of District residents, particularly in the House of Representatives, cannot be explained or tolerated in today's world.

We are heartened by your record of support for full citizenship rights for the citizens of the District of Columbia. Your record leaves no doubt that you agree that the disenfranchisement of the citizens of the nation's capital for more than 200 years is particularly indefensible and violates of the most basic principles of equal rights. We

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Hubert H. Humphrey Civil Rights Award Dinner • May 10, 2007



regard H.R. 328 as both a major priority and a special opportunity for you to lead in correcting one of the nation's oldest violations of civil rights. We ask that you take another historic step for equal voting rights, as you did in the 109th Congress with the Voting Rights Act, and quickly bring H.R. 328 to the floor for a vote.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Nancy Zirkin, LCCR Vice President/Director of Public Policy, at 202-263-2880.

Sincerely,

Bruce S. Gordon

President & CEO
National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Marc H. Morial

President & CEO
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