

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **COMMITTEE VOTES TO GIVE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOUSE VOTING RIGHTS**

Historic legislation receives bipartisan support in 9-1 vote

WASHINGTON – The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, led by Chairman Joe Lieberman, ID-Conn., and Ranking Member Susan Collins, R-Me., passed historic legislation on Wednesday to give citizens of the District of Columbia a voting seat in the House of Representatives. The bill was reported out of the Committee 9-1, with the support of six Democrats and three Republicans, and was met with an eruption of audience applause.

The bill, S.1257, co-sponsored by Lieberman and Senators Orrin Hatch and Robert Bennett, both R-Utah, would increase the number of members of the House of Representatives from 435 to 437, adding one for the District of Columbia and one for the State of Utah, which is the next state in line to receive an additional seat based on 2000 census figures. Similar legislation was passed by the House of Representatives in April by a vote of 241-177.

“I feel optimistic that this is the year we will finally bestow upon the citizens of the District the civic entitlement that every other federal tax-paying American citizen enjoys, no matter where he or she lives,” Lieberman said. “This legislation addresses a matter of injustice that affects almost 600,000 Americans who happen to be the residents of our nation’s capital, and who have never had voting representation in Congress. It is a national disgrace that the greatest democracy on the planet treats the citizens of its capital city this way, and it is time now to right this historic wrong.”

Collins said: “I believe that residents of the District of Columbia should have voting representation in the U.S. House of Representatives as a matter of fundamental fairness. The concern that I have always had is how this representation could be granted to the District in a manner that is consistent with the Constitution. This complicated question was discussed during our recent hearing where we heard varying views from respected constitutional scholars. I have concluded that the constitutionality of this legislation is a close call and is best resolved by the courts. Given my support for the underlying goal, I have decided to support this legislation.”

Collins offered two amendments to the legislation, both of which were accepted. The first clarified that the bill does not impact the composition of the Senate. The other would ensure an expedited judicial review if the legislation were challenged in court based on its constitutionality.

Lieberman said he hopes the bill is brought to the Senate floor during the July working period, and is “optimistic” about securing the 60 votes necessary to override a Senate filibuster.

“After years of political stalemate on this issue, we now have a bill before us that is politically neutral with a diverse coalition of colleagues on both sides of the aisle,” Lieberman said. “Let us not waste this moment.”

District of Columbia Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and the city’s mayor, Adrian Fenty, were both in attendance.