



## ***Congress Should Grant Greater Self-Governance to DC and Pass the Legislative Autonomy Act (H.R.960)***

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### **Legislative Autonomy and the District of Columbia**

Under the District of Columbia Home Rule Act of 1973, **Congress and the President retain the last word regarding the District's ability to enact legislation.** The DC City Council must submit all laws that it approves to Congress for its review. During this review period, Congress may enact into law a joint resolution disapproving the Council's Act. If the President approves this joint resolution, the measure is prevented from becoming law.

On February 10, 2009, Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) introduced the District of Columbia Legislative Autonomy Act (Legislative Autonomy Act) to amend the Home Rule Act by **eliminating congressional review of newly-passed District laws.** The bill would eliminate the 30-day congressional review period for civil laws and the 60-day review period for criminal laws.

### **Delays in Congressional Review Creates Inefficiencies in Local Government**

Congressional review periods of DC's local legislation often stretch beyond 30 or 60 calendar days because the clock only counts down on days when Congress is in session. Thus, to ensure that District operations continue uninterrupted, the DC City Council must often approve legislation concurrently on an emergency, temporary and permanent basis. Some bills do not become law at all. DC City Council Chairman Vincent Gray estimates that from 1997 through 2008, emergency and temporary legislation amounted to more than two-thirds of the bills enacted by the Council—totaling 465 emergency or temporary bills out of 600 laws approved. The delay in enactment of legislation also may cause the District to not receive funding in a timely manner or increase implementation costs.

### **Congressional Review of Legislation is Unique to DC and Infrequently Used**

The District of Columbia is the only jurisdiction where local legislation is subject to congressional review. Not even in the four U.S. territories—where residents do not pay federal taxes—are local laws subject to congressional approval. Additionally, while Congress has the power to reject DC's local laws, Congress has only disapproved three of the more than 2,000 legislative acts that have been passed by the DC City Council since 1974.

### **Legislative Autonomy Act Would Help Restore Self-Governance**

Like every other government in the U.S., the locally-elected members of the Government of the District of Columbia should enjoy legislative autonomy to better serve their constituents. With passage of this legislation, DC will be able to tackle its own problems with more resources and greater freedom.