

DC Voting Rights Quiz Answer Key

- 1) **Washington, DC is just a city.**

FALSE

DC is most accurately described as a District - not a city, county, or state. The DC government is responsible for most jobs of a city, county, and state. DC runs a District police force, a District school system, and DC is treated as a state in more than 500 federal laws. DC has its own legal code, like states. The District's mayor has much in common with governors, and Council members have much in common with state legislators.

- 2) **Americans can have their civil rights denied depending on where in the United States they live.**

TRUE

Unlike the 50 states, Congress has complete control over DC's laws. Congress can change DC's local budget and cancel any law it does not agree with. DC has been denied equal representation in the Senate, a right enjoyed by citizens in all of the 50 states.

- 3) **The framers of the U.S. Constitution intended to deny District residents congressional voting rights.**

FALSE

Times were different when the Constitution was written. At that time the federal government needed the state for protection if there was a revolt. That was why the federal government wanted to have control over DC. The record shows that the founders were concerned about the rights of District citizens and left open the possibility that future generations could address the unfairness.

- 4) **People who live in DC have more influence because they are closer to the President and Congress.**

FALSE

Maybe this was true years and years ago before there were jet planes, telephones, faxes and e-mail. Most federal officials now know more about and are more interested in the people from their state, as well as national and international affairs than in DC issues. Few DC residents have privileges because they live near the President and Congress.

- 5) **DC citizens pay federal and local taxes even though they have no voting representation in Congress.**

TRUE

DC citizens pay District taxes, to the tune of \$5 billion per year. This money is sent to Congress, and is given back to DC to pay for DC's city budget. This process causes some to mistakenly believe the money comes from Congress when it comes from the

pockets of DC taxpayers. In addition, DC citizens pay full federal taxes. They pay higher per capita taxes than 49 of 50 states.

6) The population of DC is not large enough to have representation.

FALSE

There are eight states that, like DC, have a population less than one million. DC has a larger population than Wyoming. Size has never been the main issue. It is in the House of Representatives where representation is determined by population size.

7) Because most of Washington, DC, is government land, the District cannot have representation.

FALSE

The area known as the National Capital Service Area, a very small portion of the District, is home to Congress, the White House, the Supreme Court, and the Smithsonian museums takes up 63 percent of the city. In comparison, the federal government owns 88 percent of Nevada, 68 percent of Utah, 67 percent of Arkansas, 65 percent of Idaho, 56 percent of Oregon, and 50 percent of California. However, citizens of those states retain rights. In fact, of all the capitals of democratic nations in the world, the U.S. is the only country where citizens of its capital cannot vote in the national legislature. DC's 120 neighborhoods belong to the people who live there.

8) Most Washington residents have lived in the District for more than 20 years.

TRUE

Most people who live in DC (nearly 600,000) are permanent residents. There are more than 120 neighborhoods that residents call home. More than 50 percent of residents have lived in DC for 20 years or more.

9) It is impossible for DC to achieve voting rights.

FALSE

Earlier in our history, people said women would never achieve voting rights and that African Americans would never achieve voting rights. Through a lot of hard work, sacrifice, demonstrations, and legislation, women and African Americans were granted the right they deserved.

10) DC citizens have worked hard throughout history to gain equal rights.

TRUE

Many DC citizens have worked since 1800 to achieve political rights. Each generation has written letters, protested, filed lawsuits, and attempted to change its status. Citizens tried to pass a Constitutional amendment for equal voting rights for President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives. Currently, there are a number of organizations, including DC Vote that work to educate people around the region and the country about the injustice.