



## DC Voting Rights: A Personal Story

[www.dcvote.org](http://www.dcvote.org)

December 18, 2006

Dear Member of Congress:

When Congress reconvenes in January, we urge you to work for passage of the **DC Voting Rights Act**, a bill that would give DC residents a vote in Congress for the first time ever.

The bill had tremendous momentum in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, and we expect it to carry over in the New Year when it is reintroduced.

In a House Judiciary Subcommittee hearing in September, legal scholars and lawmakers expressed unanimous agreement that denying DC residents a vote in Congress is an injustice that must be corrected.

With a 29-4 vote in May, the DC Voting Rights Act moved out of the House Committee on Government Reform, receiving overwhelming bipartisan support.

In addition to legislative activity, the bill is also generating personal testimony about what a vote in Congress would mean to the taxpaying citizens of the District of Columbia. I want to share with you a compelling story that was printed in the *Washington Post* this month.

**Please take a moment to recognize the tremendous irony of an Iraqi-American citizen being able to vote in Iraq and being denied a vote in America's democracy.**

We ask you to work in the new Congress to end taxation without representation in Washington, DC.

Sincerely,

Ilir Zherka  
Executive Director

## The Washington Post

**Title: My Vote Counts in Iraq. So Why Not in Washington?**  
**Date: Sunday, December 10, 2006**  
**Author: Andy Shallal, DC Resident and Business Owner**

"My family and I moved to the District from Northern Virginia this year. As new residents of Washington, we had to update our car registration, renew our driver's licenses and, of course, register to vote. Although I had seen the phrase "Taxation Without Representation" displayed on D.C. license plates before, the term had never resonated with me until I read it on my own car tag. Suddenly I found myself stripped of one of the most essential rights of a U.S. citizen: I had no effective representation in Congress.

(over, please)

“My inability to elect a voting representative in Congress was even more paradoxical because, as an Iraqi American, I was able to vote in January 2005 for representation in Iraq's new parliament. My American-born 18-year-old daughter, Laela, by virtue of having an Iraqi-born father, was eligible to vote for a representative in Iraq. Never mind that she had never been to Iraq, does not speak Arabic and does not intend to live there.

“Just last year President Bush was hailing the vote in Iraq as a pivotal step in the march toward democracy. He said that "by participating in free elections, the Iraqi people have firmly rejected the anti-democratic ideology of terrorists" and have embraced one of the fundamental tenets of democracy, voting. Who could forget the endless lines of Iraqi women standing for hours to vote, only to emerge from behind the polling booth with their smiles and purple fingertips raised high with pride and determination?

“On Nov. 7, my daughter and I went to the polls early in the morning. As we stood in line with our brand-new voter registration cards in hand, eager to cast our first votes in our new community, we regretted having registered to vote in the District. "At least in Virginia," Laela said, "our vote would have really made a difference."

“While standing in line Laela also complained about the long wait. I reminded her that Iraqis had to wait for hours under dangerous and difficult circumstances to cast their ballots. "At least they were really voting for something," she said.

“Her lack of enthusiasm was disturbing. I suspect that in the next election cycle, she will choose sleep over standing in line to cast a vote that won't make a difference. My daughter and 600,000 other residents of Washington need a voice in Congress. It is time to put an end to taxation without representation and allow citizens in the District the same rights that Iraqis now enjoy: the right to elect voting representatives.”

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