Testimony on behalf of DC Vote
from
Kimberly Perry, Executive Director

Before the Committee of the Whole
of the
Council of the District of Columbia

Hearing
PR 21-302; ‘Statehood or Else’ Signature Campaign Resolution of 2015
October 27, 2015

Thank you Chairman Mendelson for giving DC Vote the opportunity to share our thoughts on PR 21-302; ‘Statehood or Else’ Signature Campaign Resolution of 2015.

DC Vote is a national organization working to strengthen democracy and secure equality for the 646,000 disenfranchised residents of the District of Columbia.

We support statehood for the District of Columbia, and work toward it every day, but believe PR 21-302 falls short of the resources necessary to make the “Statehood or Else” Signature Campaign Resolution of 2015 a success. The Council would be prudent to contemplate several issues as it moves to support such a strategy.

First, substantial resources – both financial and human – will be required to successfully achieve the goals laid out in this resolution. No infrastructure for collecting 1,000,000 signatures is currently in place. DC Vote knows firsthand that considerable financial resources must be dedicated to attempt to build a supporter list of this size. Certainly, the resources required to undertake such an effort are not currently available among the various private groups engaged in our fight for equality and statehood. Many benefits can be derived from recruiting volunteers to undertake a petition effort, but reaching the goals of an initiative of this scope, in the relatively short timeline described in the legislation, will likely require more than an all-volunteer effort. And, as written, the resolution does not contemplate the spending of government resources to achieve the stated goals.

Second, any list-building effort should target potential supporters outside of the District of Columbia. Clearly, with a goal of one million signatures, significant collection will have to take across the country. Furthermore, building networks in states is our best strategy for reaching members of Congress and others who will play an important role in the quest for statehood. This will require a substantial and far-ranging recruitment effort.
Third, contact information, in addition to signatures, must also be collected and maintained in a database to advance our shared goal of statehood over the long term. Coordination with private groups already working on the issue is critical. This will require an organization with list-building capacity to serve as a depository of the information. Any petition effort would be most effective in pushing our agenda forward if the supporters on that list are kept abreast of what’s happening in the movement and moved from supporters to those that can take action. If that happens, the many organizations already working for statehood could work together and use this data to advance our goals for years.

DC Vote greatly appreciates the desire by the Council to advance our shared goal of statehood. Thank you for allowing us to share DC Vote’s observation about this legislation.