

## District of Columbia 2014 Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire

### “Strengthening Our Local Democracy”

#### Responses from Muriel Bowser, Democratic Mayoral Nominee

#### **1. How might you coordinate with DC’s Delegate to Congress and together maximize the city’s productive relationships with the Washington regional congressional delegation to advance the agenda for greater autonomy and representation?**

*As Mayor, I would prioritize establishing a collaborative relationship with DC’s Delegate to Congress. Together, both offices would work to grow a supportive coalition – regionally, nationally and internationally – advancing our aligned end goals: statehood, local budget autonomy and Congressional representation for all District residents.*

*I will convene an initial strategy session within the first 100 days of my administration that will build upon the work done by DC Vote and other to ensure that we have a consensus approach on achieving our goals.*

*And have already met with our regional delegation to discuss our priorities and will continue to press our case with them once I am Mayor.*

#### **2. What strategies would you employ to stop riders from being placed on DC appropriation bills?**

*As Mayor, I would make sure we are aligning with national interest groups in advance of Congressional budget negotiations, to ensure we have a plan in place with our allies in other states to fight the attempts to amend DC appropriation bills with harmful “riders”. We all need to make sure that votes on these riders are uncomfortable for the majority of Congressional lawmakers. It is important to remember (and remind others outside of the District) that riders attached to DC appropriation bills are not voted on by any elected official representing DC voters, unlike in every other part of the country.*

#### **3. If elected mayor and invited to the White House, what would be the top three issues you would raise? Related to this, what plans do you have to reach out to the White House after taking office?**

*As we all live in the Nation’s Capitol, the seat of the U.S. government, it is critical for the DC Mayor to establish a solid working relationship with the White House. As Mayor, my top issues to discuss with the White House would include: (1) pursuing DC statehood and budget autonomy, (2) closing the income gap and partnering with groups such as My Brother’s Keeper Partnerships (3) partnering on improved under-utilized federal land upkeep and usage and determining whether surplus federal property might be deployed for job creation and economic development opportunities in under-served areas.*

#### **4. How might you amend DC’s Home Rule charter, within the legal guidelines outlined by Congress, to gain any greater autonomy for our local government?**

*There is no greater example of direct democracy than ballot initiatives. The fact that even ballot initiatives supported by an overwhelming majority of District residents cannot become law without further Congressional approval is directly in opposition to our American values. As is the case in other states, ballot initiatives supported by District voters should become law, even if these initiatives amend the Home Rule charter. As Mayor, I would push Congress to amend the Home Rule charter to clarify that successful ballot initiatives*

*amending the Home Rule charter should become law.*

**5. What types of executive actions could the DC government take to assert greater autonomy without changing the law or asking for approval from Congress?**

*As Mayor, I am committed to creating greater awareness of the fact that District residents are unable to participate fully in our democracy. The DC Vote commercials running in all of our DC taxicabs continue helping to drive awareness, and we shouldn't stop there. Every visitor to our city should know about our plight, as should other international societies pushing for similar causes.*

**6. While organizations like ours are fostering local, national and international partnerships all the time to advance democracy, from your perspective, who are our most strategic allies in the fight for autonomy and representation that we haven't reached out to yet?**

*The coalition that DC Vote has built over the years is tremendous. As Mayor, I would help bring even more national and international attention to our goal. Specifically, federally-supported organizations, like the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, have been created to advance democracy worldwide. These organizations and others, supported by the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy and the United Nations Development Program, work to promote democracy in developing countries. The fact that these organizations are able to successfully push for greater representation in countries that don't support democratic values should be an embarrassment to our national elected officials – and we should make sure they are part of our coalition.*

*Additionally, we have failed to properly engage and sustain that engagement with the youth. We need to ensure that they participate in this important effort, and we need to engage them on the medium that they rely on the most—social media and social networks such as Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms.*

**7. What specific things would residents of DC see coming out of your mayor's office that would make it clear that advancing democracy for DC is a high priority?**

*For the past 18 months, I have been clear about my intent to broaden the legislative affairs team working on DC issues before Congress. As Mayor, I am committed to making sure we have the much needed resources and staff in place to advance democracy for DC residents.*

**8. The District government ended up divided over the local Budget Autonomy Act. This law was unanimously supported by the council, signed by the Mayor and overwhelmingly approved by voters. As Mayor, what would you do to make sure DC presents a unified front on initiatives designed to give greater autonomy to the people of the District?**

*As Mayor, I would make sure I discuss my views with the Council, the newly elected Attorney General, DC Vote, and other stakeholders before announcing any public statement. It is important that these conversations happen in advance of any ballot initiative. I have always made sure I seek input before coming to any important decision, and I will continue to do so as Mayor.*

**9. In 2001, Congress mandated through the Appropriations Act that the District establish two reserves that could be described as "rainy day" funds. Although these reserves are funded with local dollars, Congress set very strict rules on when funds could be used and how they would have to be repaid. What would you do, if anything, to seek greater or full local autonomy over these reserves?**

*As stated previously, as Mayor, I am committed to pursuing local budget autonomy. Specifically, in regards to the "rainy day" funds, the next-year replenishment requirement and the restrictions on what these funds can be used for are overly restrictive and not in line with most state laws regarding use of these funds.*

*One of the main reasons other states are less prescriptive in regards to "rainy day" funds is to allow the use of these funds to further federal funding during economic downturns and natural disasters. It would seem that Congress would want to make sure DC funds could be used to extend the impact of federal dollars responsibly. As Mayor, I would be committed to reminding Congress of this, in order to gain greater autonomy over these funds. Prior to making any responsible changes to laws in regards to the rainy day funds, I would insist that our bond rating agencies are on board with the needed flexibility.*

**10. Recently, a federal district judge from New York held that the city's ban on the carrying of firearms outside the home is unconstitutional. How do you think the city should respond to this ruling?**

*Above all else, the safety of our residents and the visitors to our city, including members of Congress, is a primary concern. I respect our Constitution and stand with Americans everywhere in calling for responsible gun ownership and background checks. Most of us agree that more guns in our city don't make streets safer. I'm committed to pursuing a path forward that makes sure we are fighting to keep guns off our streets in the courts and in front of Congress.*

*I also think that the Attorney General should appeal this ruling.*

**11. DC's charter school board recently sued the city challenging the authority of the Council to alter the student funding formula established by Congress. What would you do as mayor to contest Congressional interference in matters like schools that that are clearly state and local functions?**

*As stated previously, as Mayor, I am committed to pursuing local budget autonomy. In regards to improving our schools, as Mayor, I'm committed to showing Congress that through greater flexibility in the city's ability to appropriate education dollars, we would be better positioned to provide quality educational services to the next generation regardless of whether this involves a public or charter school*