

**DC for Democracy Questionnaire**  
**April 3, 2012 Democratic Primary**  
**US Senator (Shadow) - Michael D. Brown**

**1. Why are you running for Shadow Senator, and if (re)elected, what are the three most important things you intend to accomplish?**

I am running for Senator because I want to continue the important work I started five years ago. I think that great progress has been made in the last few years and that we need to keep working hard to keep the momentum going. I really think the debate has changed from "if" we become the 51st state to "when" we become the 51st state. If reelected, I intend to increase awareness in the District about how our status affects our lives everyday. Many Washingtonians do not make the connection between their disenfranchisement and the many problems it causes. Educating residents must be a top priority. I would also like to involve the City Council in a more sustained and aggressive campaign to promote statehood. Puerto Rico spends \$ 20 million dollars a year pursuing statehood and we spend almost nothing (less than \$ 200,000.) I want to put pressure on the Council to provide the resources necessary to carry out an effective public relations campaign, both locally and in states where we need support for our current statehood bill H.R. 265. Finally, I want to continue to advance the office of "Shadow" Senator. I think I have increased the involvement and visibility of the office in my first term but more needs to be done. If people understood and were more supportive of this office, we could accomplish a great deal more.

**2. What are your qualifications to serve as Shadow Senator?**

I was elected to the position of United States Senator for the District in 2006 and have served in that capacity for the past five years. In addition, I am a former ANC Commissioner (ANC3-E) and have been President of the Western Avenue Citizens Association for the past ten years. I have been a community activist and I am an elected delegate to the Ward 3 Democrats. I was President of a political direct mail firm here in Washington for 25 years and have worked on many campaigns including, six Presidential Campaigns. I am the former Director of Donor Development at the Democratic National Committee and have served in different capacities at the past nine Democratic National nominating conventions. In 2008 Barack Obama said, " even without a vote Senator Brown has always been a strong advocate for the rights of DC residents." In 2010 I was given an award from the ACLU for my work on DC Statehood. That same year I received an award for twenty years of outstanding service to the Government Accountability Project. I have a B.A. In Government and a M.A in Public Policy from the University of

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Maryland.

**3. If (re)elected, what would you do in the short term to build momentum for the movement for statehood movement?**

I think we need to continue working on all fronts to build momentum for the statehood movement. This would include continued civil disobedience. Over the past ten months 75 of us have been arrested and some of us have gone to trial. I think we need to sustain this effort in a more coordinated attempt to continue to bring attention to the movement. In addition, I think we need to take advantage of upcoming events like Emancipation Day. I am currently working with a host committee for the upcoming 150th anniversary of Emancipation Day. We are planning activities to promote statehood and get residents involved, much like we did for the Martin Luther King Memorial dedication. This is a unique opportunity to get Washingtonians engaged in our movement through this very special celebration of our only local holiday. I am also working on creating a “speakers bureau” so that we can send people into the community to talk about statehood at community and ANC meetings. My hope is that this program will be in place by this summer. I think if we can work through the existing network of ANC’s we can get people involved all across the city.

**4. If (re)elected, what would you do to build more active support from DC residents?**

As I already mentioned, I think education must be a top priority in building more active support from DC residents. We need to develop more extensive programs of education for both citizens and students. I am currently working with DCPS to see if the existing high school social studies curriculum can be improved and also working on an outreach program to help inform the community. I think we need to continue to have rallies and teach-in’s and work harder at publicizing them. I also believe that we need to develop more of a presence at local events like Adams Morgan Day, to tie the issue of statehood to our sense of civic pride and get people involved at the neighborhood level. In addition, I think we should look at more creative ways to get people involved as well. Things like a city-wide essay contest in schools could help to educate and involve students. The first annual DC State Fair could be held at the DC Convention Center and would go a long way in showcasing the District and all its great neighborhoods. I think if we begin to act

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more like a state, residents will be more likely to see themselves as potential inhabitants of a state. Of course all of this will take money, so fundraising and support from the DC government would have to be an essential part of this strategy.

**5. If (re)elected, what would you do to increase awareness among those outside the Washington metro area of the District of Columbia's lack of voting representation? Present your vision for the national campaign for DC rights in the fifty states.**

Since my election I have traveled to thirteen different states to talk about the lack of representation and self-determination in the District of Columbia. I've spoken to educators, legislators, students and citizens from all walks of life and emphasized the need for their support for DC statehood. I also started a nation wide on-line petition in support of statehood that has been signed so far by people from 35 states. My vision for a national campaign revolves around the non-profit organization I started in 2010 called Teach Democracy - DC, which provides information and resources to social studies teachers throughout the country. The organization promotes the idea that high school teachers should use the situation in the District of Columbia to teach their students about civil rights and get them involved in experiential learning by being part of our struggle for equality. I have trained social studies teachers in both Atlanta and here in Washington, at the National Conference for the Social Studies. As a result, a teacher from Missouri got her class to lobby legislators in her state for a resolution in support of DC Voting rights. Teach Democracy provides a web-site, a guide to resources, ideas and lesson plans to help teachers learn and teach about our lack of rights in DC. In addition, it provides a vehicle for students and teachers across America to get involved. My hope is that as it grows, teachers will see the value in having a real time example of civil rights in action as a tool to help students learn and become better citizens by participating in the democratic process. Since no money has ever been allocated or raised for a national campaign, I have attempted to use our available, very limited, resources to reach out nationwide. I am encouraged about the progress of Teach Democracy-DC and I think it holds real potential for getting our message out. When we consider a national campaign we should also focus on the millions of tourist that come to Washington every year. We should work with the Convention Center and Destination DC to make sure that when people visit the Nation's Capital they leave with an awareness of our unequal status and our desire

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for statehood. The most cost effective way to reach the most people is to get our message out to tourist when they visit DC. The bus placards are a start, but we need to do more.