

DC for Democracy 2014 Shadow Senator Questionnaire

PAUL STRAUSS Responses

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

The District of Columbia has been my home now for over 30 years. I care deeply about the lack of voting representation for the nearly 600,000 citizens of the District, and have dedicated 18 years to the cause. I want to finish the job I started.

For the first time since 1993, we have statehood bills in both the Senate and House of Representatives. This is our best opportunity to push for full statehood. During my time in this position, I have worked tirelessly to build relationships with elected representatives and their staff.

Never has this most been needed than last year during the government shut down. When other DC leaders were unable to reach key officials, I was able to talk directly with Senators and to key members of the Senate Leadership, and worked with Senate staff to ensure that the impact on the District was kept to a minimum. The length of time that I have invested in these relationships means that I have access where others did not.

The people of the District of Columbia deserve;

1. Full Federal Voting representation,
2. Complete Self-Determination; and
3. DC Statehood, (accomplishes all).

I have built relationships and worked tirelessly to educate people both in the District and around the Nation and even the world about the disenfranchisement of the District of Columbia.

I am honored that our President, Barack Obama said that I have "always been a strong advocate for the rights of DC voters", and I have been proud to work with him, and other voting Senator's and Representatives to advance the cause of DC's full and equal rights.

I am not going to quit now, when the District of Columbia has made so much progress advocating for it's rights in the United States Senate. I ask for your vote, and if I am fortunate enough to get it, I am confident that I have earned it.

2. What are your qualifications to serve as Shadow Representative, and what have you done to promote statehood?

My experience includes founding and running a successful law firm which recently celebrated it's 20th anniversary of service to the Community.

I was a Political Science Professor at American University's School of Public Affairs.

I served as an ANC Commissioner for a decade which gave me valuable experience in meeting community needs and providing services to constituents. I was Chairperson of ANC 3E for much of that decade.

I have been elected as a member of the DC Democratic State Committee, and chaired the Party's Committee on DC Statehood. I have represented DC at National Democratic Party Conventions, and organized numerous events to promote DC's rights.

The Metro Washington DC Labor Council has endorsed me because I have been a Union Organizer, a Tenant Organizer, and Community Organizer, and I know how to motivate people to get results.

I have been an activist against Apartheid, and fought for human rights around the world for all of my life. I will continue to do so. I think it is important to note that our efforts have been valiant. Despite any significant financial resources, I have made great strides in advancing the cause of DC Statehood.

Much of the support that DC has received from major political parties has come when I attended National Conventions on behalf of the District and organized pro-Statehood events.

Many of our supporters in the U.S. Senate are Senators whom I have personally spoken to.

The support DC has received in State legislatures, in many cases has been achieved because I have spoken to specific State legislators.

3. What would you do in the short term to build momentum for the movement for DC statehood?

I will continue my direct advocacy with members of the United States Senate and U.S. House of Representatives to advance the cause of D.C. Statehood.

I will continue to enlist the support of leading figures from the Entertainment industry and other celebrity advocates in the cause of DC Statehood through the program I created called "51 Stars". Through this program, leading Hollywood celebrities appear in Public Service Announcements expressing their support for DC Statehood.

I will continue to travel around the nation and the world advocating the cause of DC Statehood, including reaching out to State legislatures, civic groups, and political party officials in an effort to promote the District of Columbia's attempt to become the 51st State.

4. If you could create your dream organization to promote statehood, what would it look like?

It would look a lot like the elected D.C. Statehood Congressional Delegation, except with full-funding.

5. What would you do to increase awareness among those outside the Washington metro area and increase support in the states for the New Columbia Admission Act?

My plan is to take the fight for Statehood beyond just talking to other politicians, and enlist the help of some of the leading figures in the arts and entertainment community. Working with the help of some of the leading celebrity advocates in Hollywood, we will help transform the DC Statehood movement from one of local interest to a national movement.

Building on the success we had with Hayden Pannettiere's initial PSA for the

DC Statehood fund, and the events I hosted with her at the Democratic Convention, I plan to have additional Public Service Announcements produced and aired with well known Hollywood stars.

I recently traveled to Los Angeles, and convened a group of actors, producers, screenwriters, and other leading entertainment industry figures for a special dinner hosted by me and a group called The Creative Coalition. The Creative Coalition is the most visible advocacy organizations, and their members have fan bases which number in the millions. Getting them behind the 51st State initiative is key to turning DC Statehood into a national movement.

The first step in the process will be the production of pro-Statehood PSA's featuring actors like Mario Van Peebles, Evan Handler, Alexis Carra, Richard Schiff, and others. These spots will feature stars encouraging fans to Tell their Senator to support DC Statehood, and will be airing soon in target markets and online. This effort will continue with DC visits by these Actors and activists to lobby their Members of Congress, and possibly even promote awareness of our Taxation without Representation in scripted entertainment.

There is ample precedent for using celebrity advocacy to advance social justice causes and I am confident my initiative will have a powerful impact in advancing equal rights for all DC residents.