

DC Democracy Voter Guide Questions

1. What motivates you to seek the position of Delegate, or to seek re-election?

I have been working to expand the political rights of District residents since I lobbied the Pennsylvania State Legislature as a high school student for passage of the 23rd Amendment granting District residents the right to vote in presidential elections. Since moving to Washington in 1970, I have been actively engaged in the fight for greater budget and legislative autonomy, as well as voting representation in Congress. Residents of the District are 3rd class citizens, behind residents of Puerto Rico and the Territories, because they are taxed without their consent. We deserve not to continue as “practically aliens in our own country,” as Frederick Douglass put it.

2. What are your qualifications to serve as Delegate?

At the Congressional Research Service in the early 70's, I specialized in District Government history and issues and worked closely on the 1973 Home Rule legislation with Congressman Charles Diggs, then Chairman of the House Committee on the District of Columbia. In 1975, I was hired by Rep. Diggs to serve as Research Director for the Committee. In that position, I wrote a history of the government of the District and its relations with the federal government, as well as numerous reports on such issues as height limits, the D. C. office of Attorney General, the development of public transit, intergovernmental affairs and others that remain valuable sources of information today. I also served as the Committee's representative on the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). Since retiring from the Committee staff in 1992, I have continued to work and advocate for our political rights through congressional testimony; published speeches, articles and letters to the editor; and through leadership on historic preservation and other issues. Most recently, at the request of the lawyers arguing the case, I submitted an Amicus Brief on the Home Rule Act deliberations in support of the District's authority to elect its own Attorney General.

3. What have you done to advocate for statehood for the people of the District of Columbia?

Over the past 40 years of Home Rule in the District, there have been Democratic Presidents and Democratic majorities in Congress, and we have made no more progress under Democratic leadership than under Republican leadership and Republican majorities. As a Republican, I believe that a bipartisan approach will be needed if any progress is to be made, and that any progress is likely to be in stages. The D. C. Republican Party platform calls for legislative and budgetary autonomy, for voting representation in the House, and for exempting D. C. residents from the federal income tax until full voting representation is granted. I have advocated for all of these steps.

4. What should be the focus of the movement for DC rights? Why?

I believe we should focus on the issue that we are the only American citizens who are taxed without our consent. Puerto Rico and the territories also have non-voting delegates, but they do not pay federal income taxes. Congresswoman Norton has twice introduced legislation to exempt DC residents from federal income tax, with as many as 120 cosponsors in the House, including all of the Democratic leadership. Now that Republicans have introduced similar legislation, she is opposed, and says her efforts were "a stunt." I would work to make this a bipartisan effort, which would doubtless attract national media attention to our grievance. That would not be a "stunt," but a critical strategy to advance knowledge and interest in our cause.

5. What can and should the Delegate do to promote full citizenship rights for the people of the District of Columbia?

1) I would seek implementation of the official policy of the D. C. Government as mandated in D. C. Act 10-222, that Congress be petitioned to exempt D. C. residents from federal income taxation until full representation in Congress is achieved. Such a united policy strategy would bring national attention to our central grievance: that D. C. residents are the only American citizens taxed without their consent. A Republican bill (H.R. 2680) addressing this grievance is pending.

2) I would work to educate the Congress and the Nation that residents of the District of Columbia are third-class citizens who are taxed without their consent and deserve not to be treated like "aliens in their own country," as Frederick Douglass said more than 100 years ago.

3) I would submit legislation providing for a non-voting Senate Delegate. Such legislation has been approved overwhelmingly by the House of Representatives twice in the past. The House should pass it again and advocate for Senate approval.

6. Including but not limited to the role of the Delegate, what strategy would you recommend to move the District forward in the fight for statehood?

See answers to questions 4 and 5. I would seek consensus behind a bipartisan approach to advancing DC residents political rights.

7. Recognizing the necessity that the Delegate must work with the Mayor and Council on a broad range of matters pertaining to our relationship with the federal government, to what extent can or should the independently elected Delegate to

Congress nevertheless speak out on issues of public policy confronting the people of the District?

The Delegate can and should coordinate response to issues with the Mayor and Council, when and where appropriate. A coordinated strategy will be stronger and more effective. The Delegate can also work with the shadow Representative and Senators. Unfortunately, the District's legislative liaison with the Congress has often been ineffective in the past. As Delegate, I would place a high priority on working to establish a bipartisan approach whenever possible, and a coordinated response with local elected officials on critical issues, such as security, transportation, law enforcement, education, and criminal justice.