



OFFICE OF SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI

FACT SHEET

H.R. 1905, D.C. VOTING RIGHTS ACT

On March 22, the House had considered H.R. 1433, the D.C. Voting Rights Act. However, during that consideration, Republicans offered a motion to recommit the bill that was designed to kill the bill – sending the bill back to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform with instructions to add language to repeal the District’s ban on semiautomatic weapons and prohibit the local government from passing new gun control measures. As a result, the Leadership pulled the bill from the Floor.

Today, the House will consider H.R. 1905, the D.C. Voting Rights Act – which is quite similar to H.R. 1433. The House will also consider a second bill, H.R. 1906, which includes provisions to pay for the costs of the D.C. Voting Rights Act. CBO estimates that enactment of the bill will cost \$5 million in direct spending over the next 10 years. H.R. 1906 covers these costs by modestly adjusting the timing of the payment of federal income taxes, in the case of people making over \$5 million per year. The rule provides that, upon the passage of H.R. 1905 and H.R. 1906, the two bills will be combined before being sent over to the Senate.

H.R. 1905, the D.C. Voting Rights Act, secures voting rights in the House for the District of Columbia. Specifically, the bill permanently expands the U.S. House of Representatives from 435 to 437 seats. The two-seat increase will provide a vote to the District of Columbia and a new, at-large seat through the 112th Congress to the state next entitled to increase its congressional representation. Based on the 2000 Census, Utah is the state next entitled to increase its representation.

Members are urged to vote YES on H.R. 1905, the D.C. Voting Rights Act, and to vote YES on H.R. 1906, Adjusting Timing of Federal Income Tax Payments for Certain Individuals.

Following are key points on H.R. 1905, the D.C. Voting Rights Act.

- **This bill ends the 206-year-old injustice of “taxation without representation” for over a half a million District residents.** Residents of the District of Columbia serve in the military, pay billions of dollars in federal taxes each year, serve on juries, and assume other responsibilities of U.S. citizenship. And yet, for over 200 years, they have been denied full voting representation in the Congress. The United States is the only democracy in the world that deprives the residents of its capital city full voting representation in the national legislature. Essentially, residents of every state have a vote regarding the laws that govern the District, while those living in the District itself do not.
- **Americans strongly support this bill.** In a nationwide poll conducted in 2005, 82 percent of the American public believed that the District should have equal voting rights.
- **Many constitutional experts, including Republican experts, believe this bill is constitutional.** There is some disagreement among constitutional experts on the constitutionality of this bill. However, there are many experts who strongly believe that this bill is constitutional – including such prominent Republicans as Ken Starr and Viet Dinh, a former assistant attorney general under President George W. Bush. These experts point to the “District” clause in the Constitution, which gives Congress sweeping powers over the city. For example, Viet Dinh, now a law professor at Georgetown University, has written, “There are no indications, factual or otherwise, to suggest that the Framers intended that congressional authority under the District Clause, extraordinary and plenary in all respects, would not extend also to grant District residents representation in Congress.”

- **Despite the White House’s announced opposition, the Congress should still pass this bill.** As the Washington Post (3/21/07) stated in an editorial entitled, “White House Opposition Should Not Stop Congress from Doing Right by the District,” “The House is set to vote this week on a measure that would increase its membership to 437 by pairing a new seat for the mostly Democratic District with an additional seat for largely Republican Utah. ... The White House, though, seeks to short-circuit congressional consideration. It won’t say whether President Bush would veto the measure, but the suggestion that he has constitutional concerns is a signal to Congress that this is an issue it need not make an effort to address. The real aim, of course, is to have Congress kill the bill. ... Ultimately, it will be up to the courts to decide [the bill’s constitutionality]. Until then, the House, the Senate – and the president – should do everything they can to bring democracy to the nation’s capital.”

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