



August 28, 2023

VIA Online Portal to Author and Senate Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Josh Newman
California State Senate
1021 O St. Ste. 6520
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SJR-8 (Newman) – Washington, D.C. statehood – SUPPORT

Dear Senator Newman:

The League of Women Voters of California writes to support SJR-8, a joint resolution championing the admission of Washington, D.C. into the Union as a state of the United States of America and urging the United States Congress to enact federal legislation granting statehood to the people of Washington, D.C.

The move for D.C. statehood gained record-breaking support in the 117th Congress when H.R. 51 and S. 51, the *Washington, D.C. Admission Act*, was introduced. The Act would provide that the State of Washington, D.C. would have all the rights of citizenship as taxpaying American citizens, including two Senators and at least one representative. The support garnered recognizes that District residents have lived in the shadow of the Capitol Building, the shrine of American democracy, for centuries, without a voting voice in Congress. Without statehood for Washington, D.C., we cannot claim to live in a representative democracy.

Disenfranchising the people of Washington, D.C. through the denial of statehood is a civil rights and racial justice failure. The District of Columbia has just one non-voting delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives and no members in the Senate. Lack of representation for the 700,000 people who call the nation's capital home – the majority of whom are Black or brown – gives the U.S. the unfortunate distinction of being the only democracy in the world that denies the residents of its capital city the full rights of citizenship.

D.C. residents want statehood, and they made their position clear during a 2016 referendum, with 86% voting in favor of D.C. becoming the 51st state.

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Congress – the same legislative body in which district residents have no voting representation – has the final say over the District’s local laws. This has led to Congress using the District’s laws as bargaining chips in legislative negotiations. Members of Congress have overridden the will of the people of D.C. on numerous issues, recently voting to overturn a new D.C. criminal code. It is time for Congress to grant statehood to D.C., not make arbitrary decisions to overhaul local decisions by the D.C. Council.

This fight for D.C. statehood insists that there should be “no taxation without representation,” the principle on which our country was founded. The people of Washington, D.C. pay more federal taxes than 22 states and more in federal taxes per capita than any other state. Yet by virtue of where they live, they have no voice in our federal government.

The League of Women Voters of California believes that full representation for the people of the District of Columbia through D.C. statehood is critical to our democracy. SJR-8 is an important reflection of California’s support of D.C.’s fight for equal representation and will move us one step closer to actualizing our goal of a government for, of, and by the people.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Doute
Executive Director