



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION
AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

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The Thirty-First Legislature, State of Hawaii
House of Representatives
Committee on Culture, Arts, and International Affairs

Testimony by
The Hawaii Government Employees Association

March 23, 2022

H.C.R. 167 and H.R. 167 – URGING MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES
CONGRESS TO ENACT FEDERAL LEGISLATION GRANTING
STATEHOOD TO THE PEOPLE OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

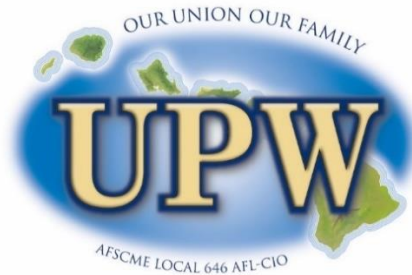
The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO strongly supports the purpose and intent of H.C.R. 167 and H.R. 167, both of which urge members of the United States Congress to enact federal legislation granting statehood to the people of Washington, D.C.

Our international union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) has been at the forefront of pursuing this important federal legislation. Residents of the District of Columbia deserve the same equality and rights to self-government enjoyed by other Americans living in the 50 states, including local budget autonomy, the ability to pass their own laws without delay, direct congressional oversight, and equal representation in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of H.C.R. 167 and H.R. 167.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE THIRTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2022**

Committee on Culture, Arts, and International Affairs

Representative Cedric Asuega Gates, Chair

Representative Adrian K. Tam, Vice Chair

Wednesday, March 23, 2022, 10:40AM
Conference Room 329 and via Videoconference

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of HCR167/HR167 – URGING MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO ENACT FEDERAL LEGISLATION GRANTING STATEHOOD TO THE PEOPLE OF WASHINGTON, D.C.

Chair Gates, Vice Chair Tam, and Members of the Committee:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties. The UPW also represents 1,500 members in the private sector.

UPW **supports** HCR167/HR167, which urges the members of the United States Congress to enact federal legislation granting statehood to the people of Washington, D.C. As stated in the resolutions, the District of Columbia has nearly 690,000 residents – more than the populations of other states such as Wyoming and Vermont – yet continues to have no voting representation in our Congress. Besides overwhelming support from the voters of D.C. in 2016 in support of statehood, AFSCME, UPW’s international union, has also included resolutions of support for D.C. statehood at past international conventions to show its support in ensuring D.C. residents have the same voting representation in Congress as the rest of the country.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KW'.

Kalani Werner
State Director

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Committee: House Committee on Culture, Arts, and International Affairs
Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 10:40am
Place: Conference Room 329 and Via Videoconference
Re: *Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in support of HCR 167*

Dear Chair Gates, Vice Chair Tam and members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i ("ACLU of Hawai'i") submits this testimony in support of HCR 167, urging members of the United States Congress to enact federal legislation granting statehood to the people of Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. is the only national capital in the democratic world whose citizens do not have equal voting and representation rights. The ongoing denial of full voting rights to the 712,000 residents of D.C., most of whom are Black and Brown, is an egregious example of ongoing voter suppression happening in our country today.

This isn't a coincidence. The hard truth is that denial of statehood to D.C. residents for more than 200 years is rooted in racism. In 1867, just after the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson vetoed a bill that would grant citizens of the District—including Black men—the right to vote. Congress overrode the veto, briefly granting historic political influence to Black Washingtonians. But just as Black voters started to exercise their political power in D.C., Congress replaced D.C.'s local government with federally appointed commissioners, blocking the heavily Black region from having full voting rights or control over its own local government.

Congress made clear that its goal was to disempower an increasingly politically active Black community. In 1890, Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama stated, after "the negroes came into this district," it became necessary to "deny the right of suffrage entirely to every human being." Senator Morgan explained his rationale, shamefully saying that Congress had to "burn down the barn to get rid of the rats." It is past time for our country to correct this historical wrong and grant full voting rights to all D.C. residents.

D.C. statehood is constitutional. Under the U.S. Constitution, Congress has the authority to admit new states, so making D.C. a state would not require any new constitutional amendments. In fact, Founding Fathers James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay always envisioned full voting rights for D.C. residents, writing in the Federalist Papers that D.C. residents "will have had their voice in the election of the government which is to exercise authority over them."

Fast forward to today: there is already a solution on the table that would allow D.C. to move forward with statehood. The Washington, D.C. Admission Act would create a state from the residential areas of D.C. and carve out federal land—including the U.S. Capitol, the White House, and other federal buildings—as the federal district. The federal district would be two-square miles and called the Capital. The 51st state, called the State of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth,

would have no jurisdiction over the Capital. We know Congress has the constitutional power to reduce the size of the Capital because it has already done so. In 1848, Congress returned most of Arlington and Alexandria from D.C. to the state of Virginia. Even before that, in 1791 (just four years after the Constitution was signed) Congress changed the District's configuration.

Denying D.C. statehood means denying D.C. residents autonomy. D.C. doesn't have control over its own laws or even full control over its own criminal legal system. Unlike every other state, D.C. cannot pass its own laws without "congressional review," something Congress has repeatedly used to block the will of the people in D.C. Congress is also able to create its own laws for D.C. residents, without any input from D.C. residents themselves—something Congress does frequently through forced "riders" on D.C.'s budget every year. Some of the many examples of how Congress has stepped in to block the will of the people in D.C. include:

- In 1998, Congress blocked D.C. from using its own funds to pay for an HIV/Needle Exchange Program, stalling the program by nearly a decade and costing D.C. residents' lives and money.
- In 1989, Congress introduced the Dornan Amendment, which to this day blocks D.C. from using its own local tax dollars to provide abortion coverage for individuals enrolled in Medicaid—something that all other states are free to do.
- In 1992, the D.C. Council legalized same-sex domestic partnerships in the Health Benefits Expansion Act, but Congress refused to allow D.C. to fund the measure until 2002, delaying benefits of the act for a decade.
- In 1981, the D.C. Council repealed the District's death penalty. In 1992, Congress ordered a referendum in D.C. in an attempt to reinstate the death penalty in the District.
- In 1981, Congress overturned legislation to decriminalize same sex activity in D.C., stalling D.C.'s effort to remove a discriminatory law against L.G.T.B.Q people by more than a decade.

It is anti-democratic for Congress to overrule the will of D.C. residents to determine local laws. It's not just a political issue, but a health and safety issue for everyone who calls D.C. home.

As of December 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates D.C.'s population has grown to 712,000. As noted in this resolution, that's more than the populations of both Vermont and Wyoming, and it's comparable to the populations of Alaska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Delaware. Among D.C.'s voting population today are more than 11,000 active-duty service members and more than 30,000 veterans, all of whom are being denied their full voting rights simply because they live in D.C. These service members risk their lives to protect this country, and then are denied their own full rights at home.

D.C. already operates with the responsibilities of statehood—just without the same representation or rights afforded all other states. D.C. residents pay the highest per-capita federal income taxes in the U.S. In total, D.C. residents pay more in federal income tax than residents of 22 other states, but they have no say over how those federal tax dollars are spent by Congress. D.C. receives less federal funding than five states, and about the same as three other states. In fact, D.C. has a greater gross domestic product than many states. and has balanced its budget every year for at least 20 years. D.C. has a AAA bond rating—a rating higher than 35 states.

Chair Gates and Members of the Committee

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It is overdue for D.C. to be granted statehood. Making D.C. a state is not a partisan issue, but a campaign for equal civil rights. It is a democratic effort to re-enfranchise more than 712,000 Americans who have been wrongly denied their full voting rights for more than 200 years. Every member of our state legislature, every member of the U.S. Congress, and every person who believes in democracy and equal rights should support D.C. statehood.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this resolution.

Sincerely,

Joshua Wisch
Executive Director
ACLU of Hawai'i

The mission of the ACLU of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai'i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving Hawai'i for over 50 years.