



STAND UP! FOR DEMOCRACY IN DC (FREE DC)

1715 - 4th Street NW ❖ Washington, DC 20001

Dorothy Height Station ❖ PO Box 2152

Washington, DC 20013-2152

(202) 232-2500 ❖ www.FreeDC.org



TESTIMONY

New Columbia Statehood Commission Budget Oversight Hearing
Before the Council of the District of Columbia, Committee of the Whole
Given by Stand Up!/Free DC Ambassador Evanna Powell
on behalf of Anise Jenkins, Executive Director
March 27, 2018

Chairman Mendelson: Thank you for giving Stand Up! for Democracy in DC (Free DC) the opportunity to testify on this important topic of funding for the New Columbia Statehood Commission.

Despite some initial reservations about the need for a second advisory referendum on DC statehood and the accelerated process that was required to get it on the General Election ballot in 2016, we can reasonably state that the “proof was in the pudding.” The overwhelming approval by 86 percent of those who voted for the new Constitution and the other elements of the referendum showed that the NCSC was, indeed, successful. But it is essential that the Commission continue its work.

The DC Council voted that the results of the referendum be transmitted to Capitol Hill, serving as a demand that the U.S. Congress admit the state of Washington, DC into the Union and extend full citizenship rights to 700,000 Americans living in DC.

As we have stated in the past, more funds should have been provided for the promotion of the referendum during the primary and general elections and to the five committees – **All Americans for DC Statehood, All Eight Wards, Advocacy, Cleveland/Philadelphia Conventions** and **Communications** – created to support the passing of the referendum. The majority of these committees should be ongoing and continue to perform the functions for which they were created.

All Americans for DC Statehood was to be composed of elected officials and residents who would organize a 50-state strategy, reaching out to people across the nation and travel to the states in pursuit of DC statehood. All Eight Wards

was created to conduct grassroots outreach, public education and volunteer recruitment throughout the District of Columbia to increase support for DC statehood among DC residents.

Advocacy throughout the 50 states should continue to reinforce the fact that this referendum was recently passed in the District. The nation and members of Congress should constantly be reminded that DC residents have overwhelmingly voted in favor of statehood and this successful passage should not lay dormant and be forgotten. This reminder will also help to promote co-sponsorship of the Washington, DC Admission Acts – H.R. 1291 in the U.S. House of Representatives and S. 1278 in the U.S. Senate.

Our Mayor, Council Chair, two U.S. Senators and U.S. Representative should not see the successful passage of the referendum as the final step, but as the beginning of a strong, concerted, ongoing and consistent push for statehood with complete involvement of all five Commission members.

Lastly, we are also concerned about the funding for and planning of the District-wide Constitutional Convention, which we were promised would take place. This will require funding to insure that the ward-by-ward involvement needed for a real Convention is promoted District-wide and will encourage mass participation.

These actions will require financial projections by a committee that can provide realistic details and estimates of how much funding will be needed for nationwide advocacy and travel – including salaries, stipends and establishing much needed media and publicity.

This is an investment in real democracy for the residents of the new 51st state!

Thank you.

Stand Up! / Free DC was founded in 1997 to help residents of our nation's capital achieve full and equal citizenship rights by agitating, educating, organizing and mobilizing for DC statehood.

FREE DC – Statehood NOW!