

Case against D.C. Statehood

Muhammed Emin Yasul

Turkey Law Review

yasulmuhammedemin@gmail.com

January 14, 2024

Abstract

The article examines the debate surrounding Washington D.C.'s potential statehood, focusing on the legislative efforts to make it the 51st state. The research investigates the historical context of Washington D.C. as a federal district, the arguments presented by both Democrats and Republicans and the implications of granting statehood. The methodology involves analyzing political statements, legislative history, and the perspectives of both supporters and opponents of D.C. statehood. Key findings reveal that while the residents of D.C. seek greater representation in Congress and fairer federal resources, granting statehood may undermine the founding principles of the U.S. Constitution, which envisioned the capital as a neutral federal district. Additionally, the political motivations behind the statehood debate, particularly the influence of partisan interests, are explored. The article concludes that D.C.'s current status as a district serves the nation's interests better, ensuring equality among states and preserving the integrity of the federal system. Solutions to representation and taxation issues should focus on expanding local government powers without altering D.C.'s status.

Contents

1	Introduction to the D.C. Admission Act	3
2	Arguments for and Against D.C. Statehood	3
3	Taxation and Representation Issues	4
4	Political History and the Case Against Statehood	5
5	Conclusion: The Case for Maintaining Washington D.C.'s Status	7

1. Introduction to the D.C. Admission Act

The Washington D.C. Admission Act, also known as the D.C. Admission Act, is a bill introduced during the 116th United States Congress in 2019. In the 1980's, the local community voted for a new bill and a new state on the ballot. Until 2016, the local community decided on the name "New Columbia," but in 2016, they changed this decision to "Washington D.C." Democrats mostly supported these decisions; on the contrary, Republicans mostly worked against them. Alternatively, Republicans instead proposed that D.C. be retroceded into Maryland. This supportive position of Democrats reaped the rewards in the 2020 presidential elections with 93% of the votes in Washington D.C.¹ Moreover, the local community requested to elect two Senate members and one House of Representatives member. On January 24, 2023, the Washington D.C. The Admission Act of 2023 was introduced in the Senate. Today, Washington D.C. continues its existence as a special status region. However, considering equality among states and the safety of the capital, Washington D.C. shouldn't be a state.

2. Arguments for and Against D.C. Statehood

The capital was designed as a federal region unaffiliated to any state. However, there have been objections for many years. In 1790, the Residence Act was passed by Congress, legitimizing the foundation of the capital city. In 1961, "Columbia" began to be treated as a state for presidential elections. However, Colombian voters had to meet the "exceeding the state with the lowest voter number" condition. On January 10, 2023, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton announced the introduction of the District of Columbia Statehood bill in the 118th Congress with 165 sponsor's support. *"Thank you to those who signed on as original cosponsors... In June of 2019, our D.C. statehood bill passed the House for the first time in our 220 years as the nation's capital and passed again in April of 2021,"* Norton said after the announcement. Moreover, she urged her colleagues to support this bill.² Contrary to this, 22 Republican attorney generals promised to challenge any essaying to make D.C. the 51st state:

¹Washington, D.C. Election Results 2020, Jan. 2021.

²Press Release: Norton Introduces D.C. Statehood Bill with 165 Original Cosponsors in 118th Congress, Jan. 2023; idem: Warner, Kaine Colleagues Introduce Bill to Grant Statehood to the District of Columbia, Jan. 2023.

“If this Congress passes and President Biden signs this Act into law, we will use every legal tool at our disposal to defend the United States Constitution and the rights of our states from this unlawful effort to provide statehood to the District of Columbia,” they said. The attorney generals wrote a letter to President Joe Biden and congressional leaders on April 13. They argue that Congress does not have the authority to create a new state out of the district and design its size.

“Not only does Congress lack the authority to create an entirely new state out of the District, but it also does not have the authority to reduce the size of the District to the equivalent of a few federal buildings and surrounding parks,” they wrote in the letter. Their letter warned that D.C. statehood would sabotage the plan of the Founding Fathers, who planned not to place the capital of the United States of America within any state so that no state would be able to exercise extravagant effect over the federal government. Moreover, they claimed that admitting D.C. as a state would unfairly benefit the city’s natives.³

3. Taxation and Representation Issues

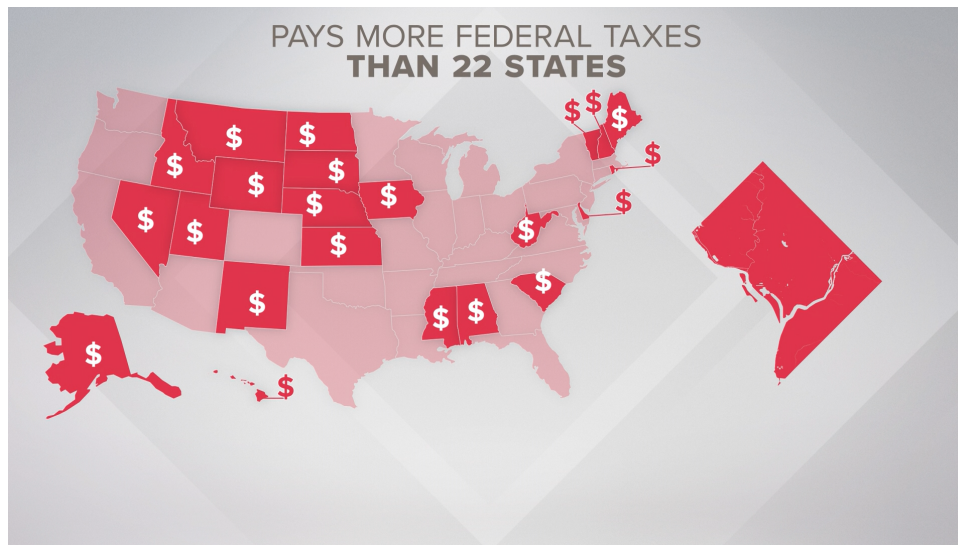
One of the complaints of the local community is about federal resources. Moreover, voting representation in Congress is necessary for the district to receive its fair share of federal resources. The most important example took place in the Isolation Era. When Congress passed a coronavirus relief package in March 2020, the district was shortchanged by millions of dollars in federal help because it was entreated as a U.S. territory and not a state.⁴

Washington DC has a graduated individual income tax, changing between 4 to 10.75 percent. Corporate income tax rates are stable in Washington DC at 8.25 percent. Moreover, Washington DC has taxed with a 6.5 percent sales tax rate.⁵ According to the other state’s tax rates, these rates are above the line.

³Janita Kan: House Committee Approves Another Attempt to Grant DC Statehood in Party-Line Vote, Apr. 2021.

⁴Maya Efrati: DC statehood explained, Mar. 2022.

⁵Washington Tax Rates, Collections, and Burdens, Oct. 2024.



We can deduce from this data that Washington D.C. citizens are trying to keep up with the excess tax burden and certainly, they can't stand this. We can see that from their desires. Moreover, that isn't the only reason D.C. citizens support the Statehood Act. For example, they think everyone should have equal representation rights in the state's managing bodies.

4. Political History and the Case Against Statehood

In the debate between democrats and republicans, republicans are the rightful side. We can prove or explain that with some illustrations about the Statehood case. "The United States" notion consists of the union of states. I mean all of them have the same status but if Washington D.C. becomes a state, the "equality between states" condition would be broken. Because if a state becomes the capital city, it becomes superior to the other states. And that means the United States of America's foundation purpose and procedures would be broken. The sum and the substance of it, if we rely on the USA's state structure means that we shouldn't support the Washington Statehood Bill.

Of course, it is possible to make some changes to representation rights. But it doesn't mean Washington D.C. must be a state. This issue can be solved with some exceptions. Yes, we support the equality of states but we support the equality of humans too. It means unjustified taxation problems must be solved too.

If we analyze the political history of Washington D.C., we can frankly see that the residents' votes depend on the candidate, not the party. Washington D.C. voted for the Bull Moose Party

in 1912 and was one of the leading districts to vote for J. Anderson in 1980 and Ross Perot in 1992 and 1996.

In 1964, Washington D.C. voters mostly voted for Dan Evans, the Republican candidate for governor, and Lyndon Johnson, the Democrat Candidate for president. Moreover, Washington voted for Ronald Reagan in 1984, then Michael Dukakis in the next election. Accordingly, the Republican candidate still might carry an election. For as much as, carrying an election in one of the strongholds of Democrats might be a revolutionary development.

The Founding Fathers of the U.S. did not create Washington D.C. as a state. Because they also realized that the constitutional structure of the U.S. was not suitable for this. If we turn Washington D.C. into a state, some of the laws would have to be changed. Such as: "Article I, Section 8 provides explicitly for a national capital that would not be part of a state nor treated as a state, but rather a unique enclave under the exclusive authority of Congress—a neutral 'district' in which representatives of all the states could meet on an equal footing to conduct the nation's business."

The Democrat media, which for years has attributed the skepticism against Washington D.C.'s statehood to racism, forgets about the fact that people against Washington D.C., with a black population of 285,810, would also be against Texas, with a black population of 3,552,997.

While Democrats argue that Washington D.C. needs to become a state so that the residents can be fully represented in the halls of Congress and a local government can have full control over local affairs, this problem can be solved without major changes. The powers of the D.C. courts and the D.C. municipality can be expanded and brought to the level that can implement changes easily without any need for additional authority. Washington D.C. does not need to become a state for this.

Another argument that I find unfair for those who advocate for Washington D.C. is the issue of police and public order. Linking the January 6 events to Washington D.C. statehood is quite irrelevant. This security problem in Washington D.C. can be solved with the cooperation of the Washington D.C. Courts and the Congress, by increasing the number of police in the region, and if necessary with the help of the states of Maryland and Virginia.

5. Conclusion: The Case for Maintaining Washington D.C.'s Status

In conclusion, the non-statehood of Washington D.C. is noteworthy in terms of equality within the country and the avoidance of conflict within the country. Analyzing the numbers, related works, and the historical context surrounding the case, it is clear that the idea of Washington D.C. becoming a state would do more harm than good to the country. Washington D.C. statehood is not only about representation for 700,000 citizens but also about the political interests of the Democrats for a stronghold like Washington D.C. to become a state. The solution to problems like representation or over-taxation does not lie solely in D.C. becoming a state. Keeping Washington D.C. as a district has been and should continue to be an important step in maintaining the peaceful union, equality, and freedom of the United States of America.

References

Efrati, Maya: DC statehood explained, Mar. 2022.

Kan, Janita: House Committee Approves Another Attempt to Grant DC Statehood in Party-Line Vote, Apr. 2021.

Release, Press: Norton Introduces D.C. Statehood Bill with 165 Original Cosponsors in 118th Congress, Jan. 2023.

Idem: Warner, Kaine Colleagues Introduce Bill to Grant Statehood to the District of Columbia, Jan. 2023.

Washington Tax Rates, Collections, and Burdens, Oct. 2024.

Washington, D.C. Election Results 2020, Jan. 2021.