



Liberal groups and federal employee unions lobby for DC statehood amid Republican opposition

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At a June 4 press conference, Washington, D.C., mayor [Muriel Bowser](#) renewed her calls for D.C. statehood with fresh urgency. The mayor was responding to President [Donald Trump](#)'s unilateral decision to station federal troops in the city during protests over the killing of George Floyd.

“We’re more than 700,000 taxpaying Americans who don’t have full representation in the Congress and don’t have full autonomy,” Bowser [said](#). “And so until we fix that, we are subject to the whims of the Federal government, sometimes they’re benevolent and sometimes they’re not.”

The statement came as the House anticipates its first full-floor vote on D.C. statehood in 27 years. With 223 Democratic co-sponsors, the [bill](#) is expected to pass the House, but is unlikely to succeed in the Republican-controlled Senate.

For years, left-leaning groups and federal employee labor unions have pushed for statehood against Republican opposition. Since 2017 alone, 26 groups have disclosed lobbying on the issue. They include the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#), [March for Our Lives](#), [Planned Parenthood](#) and the [Sierra Club](#).

The [Service Employees International Union](#) has also lobbied for the most recent statehood bill, sending a [letter](#) urging its passage to Congress in July 2019. As it stands, D.C.’s 700,000-plus residents, roughly [20 percent](#) of whom are federal employees, lack voting representatives in Congress.

Left-leaning groups’ support for D.C. statehood — as well as conservative opposition — largely comes down to the district’s party affiliation. Since the capital was afforded electoral delegates with the 1961 passage of the 23rd amendment, residents have voted Democratic in [every presidential election](#). Statehood would likely mean two new Democratic senators and a House representative.

While no conservative groups have recently disclosed lobbying on the issue, the Charles Koch co-founded [Cato Institute](#) has strongly opposed statehood. In 2014, Roger Pilon, vice president for legal affairs at the Cato institute, warned Congress of the threat of federal reliance on a new state for services [such as snow plows](#) around the White House and Capitol Hill.

Republican lawmakers, as well as the conservative Heritage Foundation, have argued that D.C. statehood would require a [constitutional amendment](#), making the process more difficult than a

congressional vote and presidential signature that other states like Alaska and Hawaii have required.

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Prominent Republicans cite James Madison's writing in the Federalist Papers that he feared conflict if a single state surrounded the entire capital. Yet the crux of Republican opposition was illustrated in a recent New York Post interview with Trump in the oval office.

"It's 100 percent Democrat, basically — so why would the Republicans ever do that?" Trump said.

The D.C. government hired its own lobbyists in recent months. The city hired two lobbying firms, the Trump-affiliated Ballard Partners and left-leaning TheGroup, on May 15 to help the city secure COVID-19 recovery funds.

On June 5, Ballard Partners cut ties with the D.C. government after Bowser criticized Trump's handling of the George Floyd protests, which had led to a clash between the two leaders. Ballard Partners announced its decision an hour after Trump attacked Bowser on Twitter, calling her "incompetent" and accusing the city of asking the federal government for "handouts." Their lobbying disclosures were also posted that day.

It was the same day Bowser had "Black Lives Matter" painted in large yellow letters on the street leading to the White House. Ballard was a major fundraiser for Trump in 2016 and sat on the president's transition finance committee.

A 2019 Gallup poll found that over 60 percent of Americans oppose granting D.C. statehood. Yet in the capital, there is overwhelming support. Nearly 80 percent of D.C. voters approved a referendum on the issue in 2016. D.C. license plates have featured the slogan "taxation without representation" since 2000.

Statehood bills have been introduced every year since 1965, with only a single full house vote in 1993. That bill failed 277-153, with 105 Democrats joining all but one Republican who voted against it.

Democratic presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama expressed support for statehood. Republican presidents George W. Bush and Trump have opposed it.