



House to vote on DC statehood for first time since 1993, lawmakers say

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The House of Representatives will vote later this year whether Washington, D.C., should become the country's 51st state, the city's lawmakers and House Oversight chairwoman said Thursday.

Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-D.C., announced a markup is to be held in February to consider a D.C. statehood bill, which is expected to be sent to the full House for a vote later this year, she said.

"H.R. 51," which would admit D.C. as the state of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth, will give residents "equal representation" in both houses of Congress and ensure Congress will "never again interfere" in D.C.'s local laws and governing, said Holmes Norton at a news conference.

"What the framers fought for has been achieved everywhere in the United States except in our own nation's capitol," she added, citing the colonial-era slogan, "No taxation without representation."

Passage of the bill into law, though, appears doubtful as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has suggested D.C. statehood is "full-bore socialism." He said in June that D.C. statehood would give Democrats an advantage in the Senate and allow them to expand the Supreme Court.

The House Committee on Oversight and Reform markup on a D.C. statehood bill would be the first since 1993, said chairwoman Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y. In September 2019, the committee held a hearing on D.C. statehood, also the first since 1993.

Washington is home to more than 700,000 residents, making it more populous than Wyoming and Vermont. But its sole member of Congress does not have a vote.

Advocates say making D.C. a state would empower the city economically and end what they see as "voter suppression" of a majority-minority city. D.C.'s resident pay more in federal taxes than some states, and its residents serve in the U.S. military, the lawmakers noted during a news conference Thursday.

"The United States is a democracy, but its capital is not," Maloney said, alongside Democrats Holmes Norton, Mayor Muriel Bowser and D.C. Council chairman Phil Mendelson.

"We do everything that we're asked of by the federal government but we do not have that fundamental right . . . to full representation," Mendelson said.

Holmes Norton said Thursday she is working with U.S. senators on getting the bill passed.

The Constitution allows Congress to create a "District (not exceeding ten miles square)" to become the seat of government. The federal government initially had full control over the area's governance, but self-rule laws were later passed over the years. The 23rd Amendment gave D.C. three electoral votes.

Constitutional framers, including James Madison, called for the federal government to maintain control over the seat of government and said it becoming a state could allow it too much power.

Opponents of D.C. statehood cite the framers' arguments and practical concerns when advocating against Washington becoming a state.

At the September hearing on H.R. 51, Roger Pilon of the libertarian Cato Institute argued a constitutional amendment would be necessary to make D.C. a state because of the 23rd Amendment.

Advocates for statehood say that's not the case and that Congress has the ability to set its own conditions for admitting a state. Under the Admission Clause, "New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union."

In recent months, some people in U.S. territories like Guam and Puerto Rico have also pushed for greater Congressional representation and argued for statehood.

Statehood is popular among D.C. residents, however a [2019 Gallup poll](#) found most Americans opposed D.C. statehood.