



DC Statehood Goes to House of Representatives for 'Historic' Hearing

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The effort to make Washington, D.C., the country's 51st state goes to the House of Representatives on Thursday — for the first time in more than two decades.

The bill to be considered by lawmakers, H.R. 51: The Washington D.C. Admission Act, would give the city of 700,000 admission into the Union and voting representation in Congress.

It was introduced by D.C. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, who called the hearing "historic."

"It's time for D.C. statehood," Norton said in a video.

"We're more than just a city of tourists. We're more than just a city where Congress sits and makes decisions," veteran and D.C. resident Antoinette Scott told News4. "We are a city of people who want the proper representation."

The Committee on Oversight and Reform, chaired by Maryland Rep. Elijah Cummings, will meet at 10 a.m. for a full committee hearing on H.R. 51. ***Livestream the hearing at the top of this page.***

A zone that includes the White House, the Capitol Building, the Supreme Court and major federal monuments would be excluded from the new area that the bill sponsors want to call the State of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth.

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and Council Chairman Phil Mendelson are scheduled to testify alongside Kerwin Miller, a veteran living in D.C. Roger Pilon, a constitutional scholar at the CATO Institute who previously said the constitution may prohibit such a move, will also testify.

City officials spent the week ahead of the hearing rallying support by hosting a veterans parade and hoisting American flags with 51 stars along Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to the Capitol.

The measure isn't a hard sell for city residents, 80% of whom voted for a statehood referendum in 2016.

The Democrat-controlled House has warmed on statehood since the idea was roundly rejected by Congress in the early 1990s.

Now, twenty Democrat presidential candidates told News4 they support statehood in some capacity, citing reasons including expanding democracy, upholding equal protection and promoting racial justice. H.R. 51 goes to the committee Thursday with about 200 co-sponsors.

But a recent Gallup poll found 64% of Americans opposed statehood.

With 75% of the city's voters registered as Democrats, statehood hasn't won many supporters among Republicans. If the measure made it to the GOP-controlled Senate, it would have almost no chance to pass.

How Can I Watch?

There will be limited seating in the Rayburn House Office Building, where the hearing will be held in room 2154.

D.C. residents will also gather in Spirit of Justice Park, at D St. SE and New Jersey Avenue SE, to watch on TVs and speakers.