



Senate to hold rare hearing on DC statehood

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A U.S. Senate committee hearing will be held Tuesday on legislation that would make D.C. the 51st state, a rare event that statehood supporters hope will keep the issue in the political spotlight.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee will hear from several witnesses starting around 10 a.m. Tuesday, including D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, who is a strong supporter of making the city a state.

D.C. Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, sponsor of statehood legislation that has already passed in the House, will provide remarks at the outset of the hearing.

Norton released a statement praising the House for passing a bill to award Congressional Gold Medals to Capitol and D.C. police officers for helping defend the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. She cited the D.C. officers' actions as another reason to support statehood.

“D.C. residents have no voting representation in Congress,” Norton said. “On Jan. 6, MPD stepped in to save the Capitol, Congress and democracy itself, even though D.C. residents are denied voting representation in Congress.”

Norton said it is critical to remind the public that D.C. residents should have such representation.

Tuesday's hearing will be the Senate's first on the issue since 2014, when the same committee held a hearing on a similar bill that Norton had proposed.

Along with Norton, former Sen. Joe Lieberman, who as an Independent represented Connecticut, will also speak at the start of the hearing.

Statehood supporters believe Lieberman, a former chairman of the committee, can provide a nonpartisan perspective on why D.C. residents should receive a vote in Congress.

D.C. statehood is strongly opposed by Republicans for a wide range of reasons, including that it would likely lead to more Democrats getting elected to Congress.

D.C. votes overwhelmingly for Democrats and would get a voting member of the House and two U.S. Senators if the legislation passed.

GOP lawmakers have also argued that Norton's bill is unconstitutional. One of the witnesses expected to make that argument on Tuesday is Roger Pilon, of the Cato Institute.

Norton and Democrats counter that the legislation has been carefully crafted to make sure it is constitutional and that making D.C. a state would not require an amendment to the Constitution.

The House has passed Norton's legislation the last two years in a row, most recently in April.

Democratic Delaware Sen. Tom Carper is the sponsor of the statehood bill in the Senate. Democrats have more than 40 co-sponsors of the measure in the Senate, but West Virginia Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin has said that he does not support the bill.

No Republicans back the legislation. Without any GOP support, the bill can't make it to the Senate floor for a final vote.

There have only been a handful of congressional committee hearings dealing with D.C. statehood in the decades since a 1993 House vote, when Norton's original bill was defeated.