

## Too Little, Too Late: Loose Lips Daily

Posted by [Mike DeBonis](#) on Apr. 19, 2010 at 01:05 pm

*As much local politics as humanly possible. Send your tips, releases, stories, events, etc. to [lips@washingtontypaper.com](mailto:lips@washingtontypaper.com). And get LL Daily sent [straight to your inbox](#) every morning!*

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT---'[Obama Backs Voting Rights Bill](#)'; '[CFSA To Cut 54 Employees](#)'; '[Rhee, Evans Release Statements On Principal's Death](#)'; and [tweets galore](#)!

Greetings all. On Friday, President **Barack Obama** finally broke his longstanding silence on D.C. voting rights, urging passage of the House Voting Rights Act in a short statement noting D.C. Emancipation Day. 'Americans from all walks of life are gathering in Washington today to remind members of Congress that although DC residents pay federal taxes and serve honorably in our armed services, they do not have a vote in Congress or full autonomy over local issues,' the statement reads. 'And so I urge Congress to finally pass legislation that provides DC residents with voting representation and to take steps to improve the Home Rule Charter.' But should the city be forced to accept a gutting of gun laws that its local officials and citizenry widely support? No way, [says the WaPo editorial board](#)---which not only decries the guns-for-vote compromise but also Obama's milquetoast approach to the issue: 'President Obama had the gall Friday to issue a lame statement urging support for voting rights, after exerting no influence whatsoever to help the District avoid this appalling choice.' But what about **Eleanor Holmes Norton**? Darts or laurels to the delegate-who-would-be-congresswoman who decided to press forward without widespread backing?

*AFTER THE JUMP---Officials take sides on franchise compromise; Betts murder a whodunit; WTU heads back to court; BRPAA reform gets a shot in the arm; Machen promises community outreach; the preservationist case for streetcars*

MORE---From the WaPo editorial: 'We have the utmost respect for Ms. Norton; she has worked valiantly over the years to protect the city's gun laws from assaults from the National Rifle Association, so we know how difficult this decision was for her. But, to borrow her own words from March of last year when she decided to yank the bill in hopes of erasing the gun provision: "There is no choice between a vote for American citizens and a completely unrelated and reckless gun bill....That is an absurd exchange that no one would accept." ....There is a risk of passing up this opportunity for voting rights only to see the NRA employ another legislative device to gut D.C. gun laws. Conversely, it's possible that Congress could approve the measure, only to have the courts strike down the voting representation while the gun provisions survive. Ultimately, those unknowables have to be set aside and the stark choice faced. Never in our wildest imagination could we have thought that we would oppose a vote to correct the historic

injustice inflicted on the people of the District of Columbia. But sometimes compromise demands too high a price. This is such a time.'

ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL---The gun issue is a nascent issue in the mayoral race, as [WAMU-FM notes](#) that Council Chairman **Vincent Gray** sees some political daylight between his anti-gun position and **Adrian M. Fenty's** pro-vote stance: "'The mayor supported this originally. It's absolutely puzzling as to why anybody would support giving up rights to get a right," says Gray. "As a matter of fact, I think we're giving up more than we ultimately get." Gray says District residents want stronger gun regulations and public safety is the primary concern.' From Fenty statement: 'It is with great pride and gratitude that I thank President Obama for his outstanding leadership and support of voting rights for the 600,000 citizens of the District. For over a century residents have gone without congressional representation, but in the coming days we look forward to working with our congressional partners to ensure a swift passage of the DC Voting Rights Bill.'

ALSO---WaPo [assembles various notables](#) to share their views on the matter. Former Virginia congressman and bill architect **Tom Davis** says, 'As distasteful as the gun amendments may be, the District should reluctantly accept them as the compromise for a vote in Congress,' seeing the body would impose its will on gun rights any time it wants. **Paul Helmke** of the Brady Campaign says no deal: 'The gun lobby's amendment would endanger residents and tourists and threaten national security by repealing the District's ban on sniper rifles that can penetrate armored vehicles. It would make it legal for teenagers to possess assault rifles, weaken restrictions on gun possession by drug criminals and the mentally ill, and repeal safe-storage laws.' **Robert Levy**, head of the libertarian Cato Institute, opposes the bill on constitutional grounds---with regard to both guns and the vote. **Wade Henderson** of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights says take the deal. And **Kris Baumann**, police union chair, agrees, noting: 'restrictive gun laws are not the answer to addressing crime in Washington.' If the gun laws are nixed, he writes, 'politicians will be forced to stop making excuses and focus on more effective ways to fight crime.' And in a [separate op-ed](#), **Gail Anderson-Holness**, president of the Council of Churches of Greater Washington, writes: 'We cannot give in to blackmail, but we must secure our vote. Our opponents think they can stop us by threatening to change our local laws. We must take the long view. The best way for us to prevent congressional interference on local issues in the future is to win passage of the D.C. Voting Rights Act. When we have more power in the Congress, we will have more power here at home.' Tea Party leaders tell WaPo's **Dave Weigel** that they [don't like the bill](#). Also [AFP](#)

STATEMENT---From **Timothy Cooper** of Worldrights: 'If there was ever a reason to be truly cynical about self-serving politicians, this is it....Whatever is Ms. Norton and DC Vote thinking? Have District of Columbia taxpayers shelled out millions of dollars to DC Vote over the past few years to have it now endanger our lives with this loony proposition? Has the District elected Norton ten times to have her propose achieving such ignominious results? Good grief. Does the voting rights brain trust actually believe that winning minimal representational rights in Congress ranks higher on the scale of achievement than protecting public safety and ensuring the right to life? Norton's bill is a

public disaster. New leadership and better ideas are required to move the voting rights cause forward. This is the sorriest moment in 200 years of DC voting rights history.'

###