RESOLVED, that the American Bar Association supports the prompt enactment at this session of Congress of legislation such as S. 160 and S.R. 157, the District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009, to grant equal voting rights in Congress for the District of Columbia.
REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

The residents of the District of Columbia do not have voting representation in the US Senate or the US House. As a result, tax-bearing, military-serving US citizens residing in DC do not have a voice in the national government that governs their lives.

2. BACKGROUND

The ABA has supported voting rights for the residents of the District of Columbia for a decade (see Resolution 99A115). The Board of Governors, on motion of Governor Carolyn B. Lamm of the District of Columbia, made this a priority issue for the ABA.

Progress has been made during the last Congress, when the US House passed a bill granting voting representation in the House to DC residents. But the bill died in the Senate, lacking 3 votes of the 60 needed to prevent a filibuster.


US President Barack Obama has indicated support of the right of the citizens of the District of Columbia to voting representation in Congress, so there is no risk of a presidential veto (as there was under the previous president).

US House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer has stated his desire to move the DC voting rights legislation through Congress expeditiously.

US House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties held a hearing on the DC House Voting Rights Act on January 27, 2009 and a mark-up is expected soon.

As noted above, the US Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee has already voted the legislation out of Committee on a vote of 11 to 1 on February 11, 2009, so the bill may be called up for floor action at any time.

3. CONCLUSION

The ABA has consistently supported legislation to grant voting rights for the residents of the District of Columbia. With the DC House Voting Rights Act of 2009 poised to come up for final consideration in this Congress, the ABA should weigh in to urge the passage of this long delayed legislation as soon as possible in the present session.
GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

Submitting Entity: The Bar Association of the District of Columbia
Submitted By: Robert L. Weinberg

1. Summary of Recommendation
   Recommends that the ABA urge Congress to pass the DC House Voting Rights Act of 2009 as expeditiously as possible during this Congress.

2. Approval of Submitting Entity
   January 26, 2009

3. Has this or a similar recommendation been submitted to the House of Delegates or the Board previously?
   Yes. See ABA policy 99A115.

4. What existing Association policies are relevant to this recommendation and how would they be affected by its adoption?
   In 1999, the ABA adopted the policy of supporting voting representation in Congress for DC (Recommendation 99A115.) Adoption of the present Recommendation would implement the 1999 Recommendation in this Congress.

5. What urgency exists requiring action at this meeting of the House?
   Congress is deliberating as this meeting occurs.

6. Status of Legislation
   Outlined above. About to be marked up in the House Subcommittee. Voted out of the Senate Committee on February 11, 2009. Action in Congress is imminent.

7. Cost to the Association
   The cost of communicating with Congress.

8. Disclosure of Interest
   Members of the BADC residing in the District of Columbia will benefit by having a vote in their national legislature.

9. Referrals
   The District of Columbia Bar

10. Contact Person
    MaryEva Candon
        Executive Vice-President
        The Bar Association of the District of Columbia
        1016 – 16th Street, NW, Suite 101
        Washington, DC 20036
11. **Contact Person (at the Meeting).**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **Summary of Recommendation.** Recommends that the ABA urge Congress to pass the DC House Voting Rights Act of 2009 as expeditiously as possible during this Congress.

2. **Summary of Issue That the Recommendation Will Address.** The citizens of the District of Columbia have been denied the right to elect a voting Representative to Congress for more than two centuries, since 1801. The Recommendation supports passing legislation that would confer such a right on DC citizens.

3. **How the Proposal Will Address the Issue.** The Recommendation would have the ABA call upon Congress to act without further delay to enact the DC House Voting Rights Act of 2009 in this session of Congress.

4. **Summary of Any Minority Views or Opposition Identified.** No opposition identified within the ABA. One member of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs (Senator John McCain) voted against reporting out the legislation.