

April 13, 2005

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Committee on Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Norton:

On behalf of the American Bar Association, I write to commend you for your efforts toward establishing voting representation in Congress for residents of the District of Columbia. As you and several of your fellow proponents noted in a recent "Dear Colleague" letter to other members of the House of Representatives, there is broad popular support throughout the country for congressional voting rights for D.C. residents. Moreover, the denial of this fundamental right to a sizeable portion of our nation's population strikes at the very core of our foundation as a democratic government "of the people, by the people, for the people."

The ABA has consistently worked for the extension of the right of suffrage, both in this country and abroad, and one of our legislative priorities is securing voting representation in Congress for citizens of the District of Columbia. One of the ABA's primary goals is to promote the rule of law – a basic tenet of democracy that is denied when those governed by the laws are precluded from voting for those who enact them. The United States is the world's only democratic nation that does not grant citizens of its capital voting representation in the national legislature. This situation undermines the United States' leadership role in advancing democratization and the principle of equality under the law around the globe.

As our nation devotes significant resources to promoting representative democracy abroad, we ought not to forget the more than 500,000 American citizens residing in the District of Columbia who are not afforded that right at home. It is within Congress' power to correct this longstanding inequity, and we urge you to continue your efforts to establish voting representation in Congress for citizens residing in the District of Columbia. The ABA is ready to assist you in any way that we can in marshaling support from our members and constituencies throughout the nation.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Grey, Jr.