



2025-2026

Team Policy Debate

Sourcebook Case 1

**Resolved: The United States should amend the
Constitution.**

Affirmative Case: Washington D.C. Statehood

We know the phrase “Taxation Without Representation” as a protest slogan from the revolutionary war, but some Americans are still chanting it today. So adamantly, in fact, that they wear it on their license plates. These citizens are the residents of Washington, D.C. Americans in D.C. pay taxes and follow the law like a state, but unlike a state, they don’t get to vote on how much they are taxed or which new laws they must follow. Over 700,000 American citizens have been taxed without representation for over 200 years. It’s time for that to change, and there’s only one way to change it. That’s why we as the Affirmative stand:

Resolved: The United States should significantly amend the Constitution.

Before we get into the specifics of this plan, it’s important to lay down a few ground rules, or definitions.

D1: State

MasterClass defines “State” as: *(MasterClass is an online education platform offering subscription-based video tutorials from experts.), “State vs. Territory: How States and Territories Are Different” On 09/06/2022. Accessed on 08/09/2025.*

< <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/difference-between-state-and-territory> >

“Each U.S. state is a self-governing entity with broad authority within its boundaries. However, all states are subservient to the national government in Washington, D.C. States enjoy self-government via a governor, a state legislature, a state court system, and federal government representatives.”

D2: Washington, D.C.

Britannica defines Washington, D.C. as: *(Britannica.com is the online platform of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, a general encyclopedia established in 1768 known for its rigorous editorial standards. Regularly updated, the site provides citations and references.), “Washington, D.C.” Written by Jeanne Mason Fogle (credentials). On 08/14/2025. Accessed on 08/09/2025.*

< <https://www.britannica.com/place/Washington-DC/City-layout> >

“Washington, D.C., [is the] city and capital of the United States of America. It is coextensive with the District of Columbia (the city is often referred to as simply D.C.) and is located on the northern shore of the Potomac River at the river’s navigation head—that is, the transshipment point between waterway and land transport. The state of Maryland borders the District of Columbia to the north, east, and west, and the state of Virginia borders the District on the southern shore of the Potomac River.”

D3: Article I section 8

Constitution.congress.gov provides the text of section 8: *(The Constitution Annotated provides a comprehensive overview of how the Constitution has been interpreted over time), “Article 1” published by Constitution Annotated, Accessed on 08/09/2025.*

< <https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/article-1/section-8/clause-17/> >

“Section 8 Enumerated Powers - Clause 17 Enclave Clause

To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings;—”

To quickly explain: this section of the Constitution lays out how the District of Columbia should work. It is the first mention of D.C. in the Constitution and the most important one.

D4: The 23rd Amendment

Reagan Library explains the 23rd amendment as: *(The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library is the presidential library and burial site of Ronald Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, and his wife Nancy Reagan. Located in Simi Valley, California, the library is administered by the National Archives and Records Administration.), “Constitutional Amendments – Amendment 23 – “Extending the Vote to the District of Columbia”” published by Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum Accessed on 08/09/2025.*

< <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/constitutional-amendments-amendment-23-extending-vote-district-columbia> >

“Amendment Twenty-three to the Constitution was ratified on March 29, 1961. It gives electors to the District of Columbia – the capital city of the United States – so that it may participate in presidential elections.”

D.C. residents can vote in presidential elections, but they are not granted the full rights of a state. We’ll get into that more later, but for now, it’s time to move on to our goal.

The **Goal** of today’s case is **Equal Rights**. The Oxford Review¹ defines equality as “the entitlement of all individuals to the same legal protections and freedoms, regardless of their personal characteristics or background.” Because we believe every American citizen deserves rights and representation in Congress, regardless of where they live, we propose a plan.

Plan: Grant D.C. Statehood

The United States Federal Government and all its bodies will enact a constitutional amendment to make the area we know as the District of Columbia into the 51st state. It will be renamed to Douglass Commonwealth, and based on its population, it will get one house representative and two senators. The current mayor of D.C. will get the new title of governor. A two-mile radius to

¹The Oxford Review, “Equal Rights – Definition and Explanation,” <https://oxford-review.com/the-oxford-review-dei-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-dictionary/equal-rights-definition-and-explanation/> Accessed 08/14/2025

be called the National Capital Service Area, encompassing the White House and various historical buildings, will function as the U.S. Capitol as outlined in the constitution.²

Fact: DC Residents Have Partial Representation

By Joseph V. Jaroscak (*Analyst in Economic Development Policy at Congressional Research Service*), “*District of Columbia Voting Representation in Congress: Overview of Proposals*” published by Congress.gov (*The United States Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government of the United States. It is a bicameral legislature, including a lower body, the U.S. House of Representatives, and an upper body, the U.S. Senate.*). On 08/29/2024. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

<<https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF11443>>

“DC residents may vote in federal elections for presidential electors (under the 23rd Amendment) and for one nonvoting delegate in the House of Representatives. DC does not have a representative in the Senate. The DC delegate can introduce legislation and possesses the same powers as Representatives in House committees. However, delegates may not vote in, or preside over, the House.”

Impact: D.C. residents have one nonvoting delegate in the house and no representatives in the senate. But what does that mean for the average D.C. citizen? Well, that brings me to our contention. We have one contention with two subpoints.

C1: D.C. Residents Harmed

a: Extreme Tax Burden

Published by The American Civil Liberties Union of D.C. (*We use an integrated advocacy approach—public education, political advocacy, and litigation—to protect and advance civil liberties and civil rights for people who live in, work in, and visit D.C. We are a local affiliate of the ACLU, a nonpartisan nonprofit that dares to create a more perfect union.*). “*Frequently Asked Questions*” On 06/16/2022. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://dcstatehoodnow.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions/> >

“In fact, D.C. residents pay more taxes per person than residents in any other state in the country and more total federal income taxes than 12 states, yet we have no say over how Congress spends our tax dollars.”

Impact: D.C. residents have one of the highest tax burdens across the states. They cannot vote to change that.

² This plan is based on “H.R.51 - The State of Washington DC Admission Act,” which was introduced into the House on 01/03/2025. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/51>

b: Cannot Pass Laws

Published by The American Civil Liberties Union of D.C. (We use an integrated advocacy approach—public education, political advocacy, and litigation—to protect and advance civil liberties and civil rights for people who live in, work in, and visit D.C. We are a local affiliate of the ACLU, a nonpartisan nonprofit that dares to create a more perfect union.). “Frequently Asked Questions” On 06/16/2022. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://dcstatehoodnow.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions/> >

“Without statehood, D.C. residents do not have any voting representation in Congress, even though Congress exerts undue power over the people who live in D.C. The people of D.C. are also denied the right to pass our own laws without congressional approval. Congress has repeatedly vetoed many important D.C. laws, causing significant harm to local public health and community safety.”

Impact: D.C. cannot pass laws of its own. D.C. residents are not allowed to vote for or against any of the policies that make Texas different from California, for example.

ADV: Equal Rights for D.C. Residents

Published by The American Civil Liberties Union of D.C. (We use an integrated advocacy approach—public education, political advocacy, and litigation—to protect and advance civil liberties and civil rights for people who live in, work in, and visit D.C. We are a local affiliate of the ACLU, a nonpartisan nonprofit that dares to create a more perfect union.). “Frequently Asked Questions” On 06/16/2022. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://dcstatehoodnow.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions/> >

“D.C.’s mayor will be given a new title as governor and the D.C. Council will become the functional state legislature. Elections will be held for the new state legislature positions created by the state constitution, and for the new U.S. Senate seats. The new state will be granted all of the same rights as every other state, and D.C. residents will be granted our full civil rights, including voting representation in Congress and the right to pass our own laws without congressional oversight and threats of congressional vetoes.”

Impact: It’s simple. D.C. residents do not currently have equal rights. If they were granted statehood, they would have the same rights as any other citizen.

It is because we believe that all American citizens must be granted the same rights and the same representation in Congress that we urge you to vote Affirmative today.

AFF Backup

D.C. Laws are Congress-Approved

By Joseph V. Jaroscak (*Analyst in Economic Development Policy at Congressional Research Service*), “*District of Columbia Voting Representation in Congress: Overview of Proposals*” published by Congress.gov (*The United States Congress is the legislative branch of the federal government of the United States. It is a bicameral legislature, including a lower body, the U.S. House of Representatives, and an upper body, the U.S. Senate.*). On 08/29/2024. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF11443> >

“Currently, most laws passed by the DC government are subject to congressional review. For more information on congressional authority over DC laws, see CRS Report R47927, District of Columbia Local Lawmaking and Congressional Authority: In Brief, coordinated by Joseph V. Jaroscak.”

Impact: No state in the union is made to submit all of their laws to Congress for review. That would be a gross violation of individual liberty and states’ rights. So why is it acceptable for D.C.? It’s not.

Partial Congressional Representation

By VisitTheCapitol.gov (*The United States Capitol, often called the Capitol or the Capitol Building, is the seat of the United States Congress, the legislative branch of the federal government.*), “*About Congress*” Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/explore/about-congress> >

“Congress is a bicameral legislature divided into two equal institutions: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each state sends elected representatives and senators to Congress. [...] There are 435 members of the House of Representatives. Each state is represented in the House based on its population and has at least one representative. U.S. territories and the District of Columbia are represented in the House by delegates who perform many of the same functions as their colleagues but cannot vote on final passage of legislation. [...] With each state represented by two senators, a total of 100 members serve in the U.S. Senate. The U.S. territories and the District of Columbia are not represented in the Senate.”

Impact: Despite being U.S. Citizens and being surrounded by U.S. states, D.C. residents are legally treated like U.S. territories. They do not have full representation in Congress and never will unless they are granted statehood.

Full Text of the 23rd Amendment

Constitution.congress.gov provides the text of amendment 23: *(The Constitution Annotated provides a comprehensive overview of how the Constitution has been interpreted over time), “Twenty-Third Amendment”* published by Constitution Annotated, Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-23/> >

“The District constituting the seat of Government of the United States shall appoint in such manner as the Congress may direct:

A number of electors of President and Vice President equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives in Congress to which the District would be entitled if it were a State, but in no event more than the least populous State; they shall be in addition to those appointed by the States, but they shall be considered, for the purposes of the election of President and Vice President, to be electors appointed by a State; and they shall meet in the District and perform such duties as provided by the twelfth article of amendment.

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.”

Impact: This is the full text of the 23rd Amendment.

Fact: D.C. is Ready to be a State.

By Statehood.dc.gov *(Statehood.dc.gov is the official website of the D.C. Statehood Movement, which seeks full voting representation in Congress and control of local affairs for Washington, D.C. residents.), “Frequently Asked Questions about Statehood for the People of DC”* Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://statehood.dc.gov/page/faq> >

“The people of the District of Columbia have voted in support of statehood, have approved a state constitution, a representative form of government and the proposed boundaries.”

Impact: D.C. Residents have done everything necessary to become a state. The only thing left is passing the Affirmative plan.

Negative Case: Washington D.C. Statehood

DA: Against Founders' Vision

By Attorney General Ken Paxton (*American politician and lawyer who has served as the attorney general of Texas since 2015. A member of the Republican Party, he previously served in the Texas Senate representing the eighth district and as a member of the Texas House of Representatives.*), “Washington D.C. Statehood Violates the Constitution, is Bad for Texas and America” published by The Texas Office of the Attorney General (*The Texas attorney general is the chief legal officer of the U.S. state of Texas. The current officeholder, Republican Ken Paxton, has served in the position since January 5, 2015.*). On 04/13/2021. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/news/releases/washington-dc-statehood-violates-constitution-bad-texas-and-america> >

“Our Founding Fathers explicitly set aside a federal district to serve as the seat of government. It was never intended to operate as a state, and for good reason.”

Impact: Washington, D.C. is a district, not a state – it is regarded differently under the law. The Founding Fathers intended for it to stay that way, and we should stay aligned with their vision as outlined in the Constitution.

DA: Most Partisan State

By Senate RPC (*The Senate Republican Policy Committee is the policy research arm of the Republican Conference.*), “Practical and Legal Problems with D.C. Statehood”. On 04/19/2021. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://www.rpc.senate.gov/policy-papers/practical-and-legal-problems-with-dc-statehood> >

“The new state also would be by far the most partisan state in the union. The most partisan result in the 2020 presidential election among current states was Donald Trump receiving 70% of the Wyoming vote. By contrast, Joe Biden received 93% of the vote in D.C. There are currently no Republican elected officials in D.C., and if D.C. became a state and its legislature reflected the current city council, it would be the only state government where one of the two major U.S. political parties holds no elected office.”

Impact: Adding a state with a non-trivial population that is almost 100% on one side politically would be a problem. There is a reason states have been historically added in twos: to keep the political balance by adding one of each party. Disrupting that balance is something the United States has never, and should never do.

SIG/INH: Runs its Own Affairs

By Alice Rivlin (Alice Mitchell Rivlin was an American economist and budget official and the Former Director of the United States Office of Management and Budget.), “If the District of Columbia becomes a State: Fiscal Implications” published by The Brookings Institution (The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. Our mission is to conduct in-depth, nonpartisan research to improve policy.). On 07/13/2009. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/if-the-district-of-columbia-becomes-a-state-fiscal-implications/> >

“Besides providing local services, such as schools, police and fire, it is responsible for motor vehicle services, Medicaid and mental health services, as well as higher education and other functions normally handled at the state level.”

Impact: D.C. is functionally a state in every way that matters. They control their own affairs and the US government rarely steps in. Adding D.C. as a state would harm the entire country more than it would help D.C.’s residents, because they already get all the benefits that states get.

DA: Not Financially Self-Sufficient

By Alice Rivlin (Alice Mitchell Rivlin was an American economist and budget official and the Former Director of the United States Office of Management and Budget.), “If the District of Columbia becomes a State: Fiscal Implications” published by The Brookings Institution (The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. Our mission is to conduct in-depth, nonpartisan research to improve policy.). On 07/13/2009. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/if-the-district-of-columbia-becomes-a-state-fiscal-implications/> >

“Moreover, the District, like many central cities, has a large low-income population with way-above-average needs for public services. The cost of providing services in the city is high as a result of elevated rents and property values, wages that reflect the need to compete with suburban jurisdictions and the federal government for employees, and expenses associated with security in distressed neighborhoods. Other central cities face similar problems but often get substantial financial help from their state.”

Impact: D.C., if allowed to become a state, would be a significant financial drain on our country. Unlike other states, they would be incapable of self-sufficiency because they use more money in services than they produce with taxes.

SIG: Four Laws Vetoed in Fifty Years

By Christopher M. Davis, Joseph V. Jaroscak, and Ben Leubsdorf (*Mr. Davis is a seasoned criminal litigator who has been lead counsel in over seventy-five trials. Joseph V. Jaroscak is an Analyst in Economic Development Policy at Congressional Research Service. Ben Leubsdorf is a reference librarian in Washington, DC. He is the author of multiple reports available on Congress.gov.*), “Congressional Disapproval of District of Columbia Acts: Overview of Selected Resolutions” published by Congress.gov. Last Updated on 04/20/2023. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IN12122> >

“Since enactment of the Home Rule Act in 1973, four resolutions disapproving DC acts have resulted in the nullification of DC laws.

H.J.Res. 26 - 118th Congress - Disapproving the action of the District of Columbia Council in approving the Revised Criminal Code Act of 2022.

S.J.Res. 84 - 102nd Congress - A joint resolution disapproving the action of the District of Columbia Council in approving the Schedule of Heights Amendment Act of 1990.

H.Res. 208 - 97th Congress - A resolution disapproving the action of the District of Columbia Council in approving the District of Columbia Sexual Assault Reform Act of 1981.

S.Con.Res. 63 - 96th Congress - A concurrent resolution to disapprove the Location of Chanceries Amendment Act of 1979 passed by the City Council of the District of Columbia.”

Impact: The Home Rule Act of 1973 allowed D.C. to function as its own state without technically being a state. Congress has stepped in four times since then, more than fifty years later, to stop D.C. from passing a specific law. The problem that the affirmative has presented is insignificant.

INH: D.C. Has a Government

By The Council of the District of Columbia *(The Council of the District of Columbia is the legislative branch of the government of the District of Columbia. As permitted in the United States Constitution, the district is not part of any U.S. state and is overseen directly by the federal government.)*, “D.C. Home Rule” published by Dccouncil.gov *(Dccouncil.gov is the official website of the Council of the District of Columbia, the legislative body of Washington D.C., established in 1973 under the District of Columbia Home Rule Act.)*. Accessed on 08/09/2025.

< <https://dccouncil.gov/dc-home-rule/> >

“Finally, in 1973, the Home Rule Act passed in Congress, and District residents approved it in a special referendum the next year. In a historic leap for greater self-determination, District citizens elected a Mayor and Council in the fall of 1974. Voters also approved the election of Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners who represent every 2,000 residents to advise the Council on neighborhood concerns.

Citizens embraced the new Home Rule government as more representative of the local citizenry and more responsive to their needs. The powers and duties of the Council are comparable to those held by state, county and city legislatures, including the authority to adopt laws and to approve the District’s annual budget submitted by the Mayor. As the legislature, the Council is a co-equal branch of government and is part of a system of checks and balances similar to any other state government. When the Office of Mayor is vacant, the Chairman of the Council becomes the Acting Mayor.”

Impact: D.C. has a local government that functions the same as a state government. What the affirmative is pushing for has already been solved – fifty years ago!