

House approves DC statehood bill, GOP calls move Dem 'power grab'

The bill is presumed dead on arrival in the GOP-led Senate and is opposed by President Trump.

The House of Representatives on Friday voted to make Washington D.C. the 51st state, a move cheered by Washingtonians and Democrats as a long-overdue acknowledgment of full citizenship, while Republicans panned the effort as a Democratic Party power grab.

The vote was 232-180. The vote fell largely along party-lines: Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., one of the most conservative Democrats in the House, was the lone Democrat to oppose the bill.

HOUSE PASSES DC STATEHOOD BILL: HERE'S HOW IT WOULD WORK

The bill is presumed dead on arrival in the GOP-led Senate and is also opposed by President Trump, who would likely wield his veto pen if the bill ever got to his desk.

Champions of the legislation — mostly Democrats — said statehood is about affording the residents of DC equal citizenship and ending the injustice of paying taxes, serving in the military, and contributing to the economic power of the United States while being disenfranchised.

“This bill allows our country to live up to its claim to be a democracy,” said Washington Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, a Democratic non-voting member of the U.S. House. “We stand out as the only democracy, which denies democracy to the residents of its own capital city.”

Opponents, mostly Republicans, called the bill a power grab for the firmly Democratic city and said the nation’s founding fathers intended the capital to be separate from the other states.

“This is about power. Make no mistake about it,” said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas. The bill would “fundamentally alter what D.C is,” he added.

The measure, titled “HR 51,” would convert the capital city into a “commonwealth,” much like Virginia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. The measure would rename Washington, DC “Douglass Commonwealth,” after abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Each state has two statues in the Capitol. D.C., since it’s not a state, only gets one statue and that is of Douglass.

D.C. residents currently pay taxes but have no voting representation on Capitol Hill. Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution called for the creation of a federal district to be the seat of government, and D.C. originally was carved out of two states, Maryland and Virginia, so no single state would have undue influence by hosting the capital.

Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., said DC’s lack of full representation is a racial injustice since the district has such a significant African American population.

“Washington DC is the home to more Americans than two states, and more than 46% of its 700,000 residents are black,” Waters said. “Make no mistake, race underlies every argument against DC statehood, and denying its citizens equal participation and representation is a racial, democratic, and economic injustice, we cannot tolerate.”

Opponents of the bill questioned whether DC was even capable of self-governance. “DC is not prepared — financially and otherwise,” said Rep. Jody Hice, R-Ga.

Republicans said if DC residents truly want voting rights they should begin the process retrocession to become part of neighboring Maryland, rather than the solidly blue district getting two new seats in the U.S. Senate.

“This is not Congress’ land,” said Rep. Andy Harris, R-Md. “This is Maryland’s land. Maryland gave it to the United States for the sole purpose of the permanent federal enclave. The nerve of hundreds of my colleagues on the other side other aisle thinking it’s their land. It’s Maryland’s land. And if you want voting rights. It’s simple. Do exactly what occurred in 1847 and give the land back to Maryland.”

“This is a purely political ploy,” Harris added.

Norton, who has championed DC statehood, retorted: “Important to note that Maryland permanently ceded the land that now is part of the District of Columbia. You can’t get back what you permanently ceded.”

Proponents of statehood compared DC’s plight for self-governance to colonial America’s revolt against the British that sparked the American Revolution.

“At the end of the day this is taxation without representation,” said Rep. Kweisi Mfume, D-Md.

License plates in DC are stamped with the grievance: “Taxation Without Representation.”

Friday’s victory marks the second time the House has voted on such a measure in the nearly 230 years since the district was established. A 1993 bill to give DC statehood and rename it “New Columbia” failed 277-153.

Lawmakers donned masks with a “51” imprinted on them, along with a red outline of Washington, D.C. as debate started Friday morning.

DC MAYOR MURIEL BOWSER, IN LATEST STATEHOOD PUSH, SAYS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ‘ENCROACHES’ ON AUTONOMY

The city does have some very limited representation, including recognition in the Electoral College, a non-voting delegate, and a shadow senator who isn’t formally recognized by the Senate. The current holder of that position, Paul Strauss, told Fox News that D.C. residents pay more federal taxes than any other non-voting territory and do not receive proportional services for their population, which is larger than those of Wyoming and Vermont.

“We are essentially a donor state,” he said.

Strauss, a Democrat, specifically said that when it came to the coronavirus funding, Congress treated D.C. as a territory instead of as a state, and Strauss said “we didn’t get the resources we needed.”

HR 51 would make the D.C. mayor, currently, Muriel Bowser, the governor, and the city council would act as the legislative assembly. The bill would give it two senators and one House member and would remove Congress’s role in D.C. affairs.

“We know that everyone all across the United States now knows and recognizes the plight of Washington, D.C.,” Bowser said Thursday. “Not only do we not have voting senators and our congresswoman not have the right to vote, the whims of a federal government can encroach up our even limited autonomy.”

The legislation would also carve out a capital city district, a special political subdivision around the White House, government buildings, the National Mall, and U.S. Capitol. That would be all that was left of the “District of Columbia.”

TRUMP DISMISSES IDEA OF STATEHOOD FOR DC, CITING POTENTIAL BOOST FOR DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESS

Republicans have made clear they are not motivated to support such a plan as it would almost certainly guarantee an additional Democratic House member and, more significantly, two Democratic senators.

CLICK HERE TO GET THE FOX NEWS APP

In a recent interview with the New York Post, Trump claimed that Democrats support D.C. statehood because the district is largely Democratic.

“They want to do that so they pick up two automatic Democrat — you know it’s 100 percent Democrat, basically — so why would the Republicans ever do that?” Trump said. “That’ll never happen unless we have some very, very stupid Republicans around that I don’t think you do.”

The last time the U.S. admitted two states to the union was in 1959 and that was done as a compromise, whereby Hawaii was admitted as the “Republican” state, and Alaska was admitted as a “Democratic” state” — although both states’ politics have flipped since then.

Fox News’ Chad Pergram, Adam Shaw, Ronn Blitzer, and the Associated Press contributed to the report.

Source:

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/house-approves-dc-at-51st-state-gop-calls-move->

dem-power-grab

[Disclaimer]