

**Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery**  
**Full Committee Hearing: Examining D.C. Statehood**  
**March 22, 2021**

Thank you to our witnesses for joining us to examine legislation introduced by our colleague, Senator Tom Carper, to make the District of Columbia our nation's 51<sup>st</sup> state.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to Washington, D.C.'s Delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, as well as former Senator, and also a former Chairman of this Committee, Joe Lieberman.

For decades, they have both served as strong advocates in the conversation to give D.C. residents an equal voice in our democratic republic.

Today, for the first time in nearly seven years, this Committee will continue that discussion and hear from the Mayor, policy, legal, and civil rights experts on how lawmakers can finally give D.C. residents the same representation in Congress as their fellow Americans.

This lack of representation for the residents of this city, which serves as a beacon of freedom and democracy around the world, is a stunning contradiction.

Since 1790, when President Washington signed into law *the Permanent Seat of Government Act*, D.C. has served as our nation's Capital.

D.C.'s more than 700,000 residents, many of whom have fought in our wars, paid federal taxes, and served the American people in public service, have been denied an equal voice in the formation of the very laws and decisions that govern them. That is unconscionable.

It's time to follow the lead of our colleagues in the House, pass the *Washington D.C. Admission Act*, which will finally ensure that D.C. residents have the full Congressional representation and self-governance they deserve, and that our democracy is built on.

Our nation's most defining principle is that our government's power is derived directly from the people. It is why we elect leaders to represent us in Congress, and every American should be entitled to the same representation in our democratic republic, no matter which part of our nation they live in.

When the founders first established a permanent seat of government at a site along the Potomac River, they could have never imagined it would become the large, vibrant, and diverse metropolis that more than 700,000 Americans call home.

While we may hear a number of questions raised about this issue today, I encourage all of my colleagues to stay focused on the core civil rights issue that we have an opportunity to address.

I look forward hearing from our witnesses and having a productive discussion today about making the District of Columbia our nation's 51<sup>st</sup> state.