



Mr. Chairman:

My purpose today is to update everyone on progress made during the last year within the international community on the issue of DC voting rights.

- In June, I met with OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Karel de Gucht, and briefed him on this issue at the US Helsinki Commission. He expressed his intentions to look into the matter. His public position will be very important, not only for the residents of Washington, DC, but also because this issue goes to the very soul of what the OSCE stands for. We look forward to the Chairman's statement and urge the 2006 Ministerial Council to address this issue in a decision.
- In July, the UN Human Rights Committee examined the DC Voting Rights question in analyzing US compliance under the terms of the ICCPR. Its Concluding Observations expressed serious concern about the denial of representation to DC residents, stating that US policy was inconsistent with articles 25, 26 and 2 of the ICCPR.
- In 2005, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted a resolution calling on Congress to grant DC residents equal congressional rights, consistent with its OSCE obligations.
- In 2004, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights declared the US Government's treatment of DC residents a human rights violation. It recommended a remedy on terms of equality. The OAS's decision—a result of an 11 year process—is the most authoritative international legal analysis ever undertaken.
- Today, every relevant human rights monitoring body has issued recommendations on the DC Voting Rights issue, except ODHIR. We urge it to do so in its final report on the 2006 US Congressional elections.

The US Congress has absolute authority over DC residents. It has exerted its authority against the will of Washingtonians on numerous occasions. Congress has attempted to impose death penalty legislation, terminate the District's strict gun control laws, and prohibits DC funding a needle exchange program that helps prevent the spread of AIDS. It prohibits DC the right to tax income at the source of employment, thereby choking needed revenues to rebuild our schools and improve city resources—as much as

a billion dollars a year. It even prohibits the spending of locally raised tax dollars to fund efforts to win equal voting rights—the very definition of tyranny itself.

Last week's discussion on gender discrimination brought to light the double discrimination that minority women experience. The women of Washington—60% of whom are African-American—face a deeper discrimination. It is a *triple* discrimination because they have no representation. Indeed, our sole Delegate to the House of Representatives is a woman, a black woman, and a black woman without a voice in Congress because she is a non-voting Delegate, not a voting Congresswoman.

During the campaign to pass the 1960 presidential voting rights amendment, when DC residents finally won the right to vote for president, it was often argued that failure to pass it would become “cold war propaganda for the Soviet Union.” The amendment passed. In today's climate of cooperation, we'd like to see a more positive kind of international pressure applied to bring equality to pass.

Thank you.