



UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE OYE OWOLEWA
WRITTEN TESTIMONY
before the
NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
Senate Workforce Development Public Hearing
February 20, 2025

SCR 4009: A concurrent resolution urging Congress to support admitting Washington, D.C. into the Union as a state of the United States.

As the United States Representative in Washington, D.C., I serve as a chief legislative lobbyist in support of D.C. statehood – inside the District of Columbia, across the United States of America, as well as around the world.

Our fight for D.C. statehood is the greatest example of voter suppression in the United States of America. D.C. residents pay federal taxes without having any voting representation in either the United States House of Representatives or the United States Senate.

Nearly 700,000 residents of the District of Columbia have absolutely no say on important matters such as the appointment of U.S. Supreme Court Justices, federal tax cuts or increases, impeachment hearings and votes, and involvement in wars – to name just a few.

We lack full control over our own resources. We lose out on federal monies and programs that residents of the 50 states receive. Congressional review periods on Capitol Hill ensure that we do not have the final word on annual budgets assembled by D.C.'s Mayor and the laws created by members of the Council of the District of Columbia. Our criminal justice system is completely controlled by the federal government. Our mayor is not permitted to act as the commander-in-chief of our National Guard. We lack full autonomy. Each and every day, we have to mitigate what we lose in D.C. by not being the 51st state in the Union.

The lack of D.C. statehood impacts Education and Youth Services, the Environment, Healthcare, Human Rights, and Public Safety in the District of Columbia. As the U.S. Representative, I address these matters as focal points along with my official duties.

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Education and Youth Services

I have collaborated with RESET, which places volunteer engineers, mathematicians, scientists, and technicians in elementary school classrooms and pre-Kindergarten centers in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. This program leads children to hands-on STEM learning. RESET'S goal is to get children excited about STEM and to consider education and career pathways in related fields. In addition, I have provided free in-classroom science enrichment to elementary students; promoted U.S. State Department internships for high school and college students; collaborated with local sports teams and fitness groups to conduct an annual youth fitness day; created internships for high school and college students to get first-hand experience in my office; and partnered with schools to provide dynamic career days. I also helped organize and participated in the 2021 "March On For Voting Rights" on the 58th anniversary of the 1963 March On Washington when the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have A Dream" speech and served on virtual panels with members of the organization, Students for D.C. Statehood.

Environmental Justice

D.C.'s federal parks often fall between the cracks of the local and federal government. I have participated in wooded area cleanups; spoken with the Office of Congressman James E. Clyburn (D-SC-06) regarding resources for forest areas in D.C.; helped remove more than 51 pounds of trash in federal parks every month; collaborated with D.C. Voters for Animals - Education Fund to make D.C. a cruelty-free jurisdiction; challenged the National Park Services' decision to shoot deer for population control; and helped to ban all fur sales in D.C.

Healthcare

Because D.C. is not a state, we were denied half of the financial resources from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to fight COVID-19 in 2020. As a licensed pharmacist, I make an impact on the frontlines of healthcare. I created a Healthcare Providers in Policy Coalition to address the latest news and legislation; helped to increase vaccine access for D.C. residents during a shortage; vaccinated more than 10,000 D.C. residents since 2021; participated with Howard University's School of Pharmacy to conduct health fairs; and, alongside Oxford House, passed out and demonstrated the use of hundreds of Narcan.

Human Rights

Without D.C. statehood, we are unable to have a say in today's most pressing human rights issues. D.C. cannot help codify women's reproductive rights and are at risk of federal government overreach into current procedures in D.C. We are unable to vote for the Equality Act. My office has hosted the Equality Panel to discuss the importance of passing laws to protect the LGBTQ+ community. I have also collaborated with Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, D.C. and SMYAL (Supporting and Mentoring Youth Advocates and

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Leaders) to write an opinion piece discussing the need to protect gender-affirming care for trans teens. I have worked with the Tenants Advocacy Coalition (TENAC) and local tenant associations to fight displacement and ensure dignity for our senior neighbors. In addition, I am working to increase the political engagement of our African, Caribbean and Latino communities.

Public Safety

D.C. lacks control over our own criminal justice system. Our local judges and prosecutors are all federally appointed. With the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate, the President of the United States nominates and appoints all judges in the District of Columbia courts. Lacking a prison in the District of Columbia, incarcerated D.C. residents are housed all over the country. With assistance from the D.C. Caucus for Returning Citizens, I successfully submitted a resolution to the U.S. Department of Justice to revise COVID-19 compassionate releases to allow released offenders to finish their sentences at home. I have also participated in and moderated four panels for the D.C. Mayor's Office on Returning Citizen Affairs and partnered with various organizations to conduct expungement clinics for returning citizens who qualify for record sealing.

Self-determination is the right to representative government with full suffrage. The people's right to form its own political entity in the District of Columbia cannot be fulfilled without the help of the state and local governments in these 50 states.

Following a trip in 2022 to the State Capitol Building in Charleston, I led an effort with Minority Leaders Doug Skaff, Jr. and Sean Hornbuckle to introduce **West Virginia House Concurrent Resolution 86** in support for admitting Washington, D.C. into the Union as a state of the United States of America. With an historic resolution, Members of the West Virginia House of Delegates acknowledged the importance of Washington, D.C. becoming the 51st state.

Today, I respectfully request that this legislative body – the NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL – vote in favor of SCR 4009, a concurrent resolution urging Congress to support admitting Washington, D.C. into the Union as a state of the United States.

Washingtonians may lack a congressional vote and a seat in our federal government, but we still have our voices. I continue to defend and support D.C.'s fight for statehood, and implore you to do the same. On behalf of my nearly 700,000 constituents in our nation's capital, I hope that you will join us in the fight for D.C. statehood, Senators.

I thank you for your time and your consideration of this most important civil rights matter.

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Oye Owolewa

Dr. Adeoye I. Yakubu Owolewa

United States Representative - District of Columbia

ABOUT ME

Dr. Adeoye I. Yakubu Owolewa was first sworn in on January 2, 2021, as the new United States Representative for the District of Columbia. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1989, Representative Owolewa is the first Nigerian-American to serve on the New Columbia Statehood Commission. Rep. Owolewa attended the prestigious Boston Latin School, graduating in 2008. He earned a doctorate degree in pharmacy from Boston's Northeastern University in 2014 and is a licensed pharmacist currently working as a Pharmacy Manager for Safeway. Prior to becoming a U.S. Representative, Dr. Owolewa served one term as an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner in ANC 8E, representing Single Member District 8E-01. As an Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner, he worked to increase science enrichment programs in Southeast area elementary schools, added traffic safety measures, and helped bring a Senior Day Center to his neighborhood. He also volunteered at his neighborhood elementary school to encourage students to become more interested in science and mathematics.

ABOUT MY OFFICE

Pursuant to the Code of the District of Columbia (§ 1–123), the duties of a Representative are to inform the Congress and individual members of Congress that the District of Columbia residents meet the standards traditionally required by Congress for the admission of a United States territory as a state of the United States; to monitor the progress of the petition for admission of New Columbia to statehood pending before the Congress and report on the progress to the District of Columbia residents; and to advise the District of Columbia on matters of public policy that bear on the achievement of statehood.

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