



September 13, 2006

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Committee Member:

On behalf of the more than 900,000 members and activists of People For the American Way, we urge you to support H.R. 5388, the District of Columbia Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act of 2006. As the Voting Rights Act reauthorization evidenced, ensuring equal access to the ballot box for all citizens is of paramount importance. We hope that we can count on your support to protect the rights of residents of the District of Columbia, and allow H.R. 5388 to move out of the Judiciary Committee.

Forty years ago, thousands of Americans risked their lives to challenge systems that prevented millions of Americans from exercising their right to vote. After continued protests by civil rights activists and everyday citizens over the gross disenfranchisement of African Americans – culminating in a violent confrontation in 1965 during an Alabama protest for voting rights – President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act (VRA) into law. Thanks to the recent reauthorization, the VRA will continue to ensure that all racial minorities in America have equal access to the ballot box for many years to come.

Sadly, this is a goal not yet realized for the half million people living in our nation's capital. Washington, DC residents contribute to America like residents in other cities and states. Yet, even though they pay taxes and serve in the military, they do not have a voice when tax policy is crafted on Capitol Hill, nor do they have voting representation when you and your colleagues consider sending them into war or approving the Defense budget.

H.R. 5388 would give them this voice and voting representation and balance the respective politics on both sides of the aisle. The bill would turn the DC delegate into a full Representative and give that person voting power. In return, the Utah delegation would be joined by a 4th member, at-large. Utah's voice would thus get its own due consideration, with the state avoiding mid-decade redistricting.

The Judiciary Committee and its House colleagues recently celebrated the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. In the spirit of protecting citizens' voting rights, we ask that you not stop there. Please support H.R. 5388, including supporting scheduling a mark-up, and voting in favor of the bill during any Committee votes.

Sincerely,

Ralph G. Neas
President

Tanya Clay House
Director, Public Policy