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ACTION ALERT

DATE: February 19, 2009
TO: Concerned Parties
FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

NAACP-Supported Voting Rights Legislation Giving the District of Columbia Full Representation in the House to be Considered by the Senate

US SENATE MAY TAKE UP THE BILL AS EARLY AS NEXT WEEK

THE ISSUE:

Despite the fact that they pay federal taxes, serve on juries and defend our Nation in times of war like most other Americans, the residents of the District of Columbia are barred from having voting representation on the floor of the U.S. House or Senate. This classic example of “taxation without representation” is contrary to everything that this nation is founded on. This means that more than half a million people, more than 57% of whom are African American (with Caucasians making up just over 30% of the population and 8.5% of the residents claiming Hispanic background), are paying money to and dying for a government in which they have no say. It also means that the federal government is receiving and spending \$4 billion without having to account for it. In fact, the residents of the District of Columbia pay more federal taxes per capita than all but one other state.

To begin to correct this gross injustice, the Senate is scheduled to consider S. 160, the *District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009*, as early as February 24, 2009. The NAACP supports this legislation as a good first step toward the goal of full democratic voting representation in Congress for DC residents. S. 160 would add two voting members to the US House of Representatives – one to represent Washington, DC and one to represent Utah (Utah narrowly lost getting an additional congressional seat after the last US Census in 2000; officials in Utah believe that thousands of missionaries living abroad were unfairly excluded during the Census count.) This bill provides a “vote neutral” option by adding two additional seats most likely to be represented by a Democrat and a Republican.

S. 160, which was introduced by Senator Joseph Lieberman (CT) has bipartisan support, and the House companion, H.R. 157 is almost identical to legislation which passed the House last year by a strong bi-partisan margin.

THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:

Contact both your Senators and **URGE THEM TO SUPPORT AND VOTE FOR S. 160, THE *District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009***. To contact your Senators, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Senators in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to your Senators' offices. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

No time to
send a
letter!
Call, fax
or
e-mail
TODAY!

Write a Letter

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:
The Honorable (name of Senator)
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

**A SAMPLE
LETTER IS
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to www.senate.gov; click on "*Find Your Senators*". Look up your Senators by state; go to their web sites for e-mail addresses.

REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!

THE MESSAGE

- Despite the fact that they pay federal taxes, serve on juries and defend our Nation in times of war like most other Americans, the residents of the District of Columbia are barred from having voting representation on the floor of the U.S. House or Senate. This classic example of "taxation without representation" is contrary to everything that this nation is founded on.
- This means that more than half a million people, more than 57% of whom are African American (with Caucasians making up just over 30% of the population and 8.5% of the residents claiming Hispanic background), are paying money to and dying for a government in which they have no say.
- The legislation the Senate is about to take up has bipartisan support, and the House companion, H.R. 157 is almost identical to legislation which passed the House last year by a strong bi-partisan margin.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!
If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

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To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit www.naACP.org

Sample Letter

(date)

The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: CONGRESSIONAL VOTING RIGHTS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Dear Senator _____;

As your constituent, I am outraged that the residents of the District of Columbia do not have voting representation in Congress, despite the fact that they pay federal income taxes, serve in the military and on federal juries. This is wrong, and contrary to everything our nation's forefathers fought and died for over 225 years ago. I therefore urge you, in the strongest terms possible, to support granting Congressional representation to the residents of the District of Columbia. Specifically, I am asking you to support the "***District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act, S, 160***". This legislation, which the Senate is about to take up has bipartisan support, and the House companion, H.R. 157 is almost identical to legislation which passed the House last year by a strong bi-partisan margin. Furthermore, this bill is an important first step in correcting this insult and aberration to the institution of democracy.

The residents of the District of Columbia – our nation's capitol and to many the seat of democracy – are the only Americans who pay full federal income taxes yet are not allowed voting representation in either the U.S. House or the U.S. Senate. This is contrary to the basic tenets of the democracy upon which this nation was founded, and is, quite simply, morally wrong. As a result of this law, over 500,000 people, over 57% of whom are African American, 30% are Caucasian and 8.5% are Hispanic, pay \$4 billion in federal taxes each year, yet have no say in how that money is spent.

By supporting S. 160 you will be letting the residents of the District of Columbia -- as well as your constituents back home – know that you support and believe in democracy for all Americans. I hope that you agree with me that this egregious error needs to be rectified, and that you will support congressional representation for the men, women and children in D.C. Please contact me as soon as possible to let me know what you are doing to expedite passage of this legislation and what I can do to help.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and
remember to include your address)

*Remember to contact
BOTH your Senators.*