

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074  
MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<http://oversight.house.gov>

**Opening Statement**  
**Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly**  
**Subcommittee on Government Operations Hearing on “D.C. Home Rule:**  
**Examining the Intent of Congress in the District of Columbia Home Rule Act**  
**of 1973”**  
**May 12, 2016**

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding today’s important hearing.

I approach the subject of home rule as a former local government official, having served on the neighboring Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for 14 years, including five years as chairman.

I know what it takes to produce a budget. I know the difficulty of making revenue and expenditure estimates under the best of circumstances. I cannot imagine how a local government can function efficiently or effectively, if each of its budgetary decisions requires Congressional approval.

I have consistently supported autonomy for the District and would argue Congress’ actions have actually had a deleterious effect on the District and its residents. I hope the irony of this situation is not lost on those who support the conservative principles of limited government and states’ rights. I guess the District of Columbia is an ideological carve out. And how is it that a legislative body that struggles to pass its own an annual budget and routinely misses

appropriations deadlines should insist on exercising budgetary authority over the District?

D.C.'s lack of budget autonomy affects the entire National Capital Region, especially the thousands of my constituents who are civil servants and work in the District. Former Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell, a Republican, supported budget autonomy because of the negative consequences for both Virginia and Maryland if D.C.'s fiscal situation is left uncertain, particularly during a federal government shutdown like the one we endured just a few years ago.

Without budget autonomy, if the federal government shuts down, the D.C. government shuts down, too, absent a specific exemption from Congress. That means all non-essential D.C. municipal services cease, potentially paralyzing the city and hundreds of the thousands of commuters.

The past two Republican chairmen of this Committee also supported the policy of budget autonomy for the District. Chairmen Tom Davis and Darrell Issa introduced legislation to expand home rule, including bills to give D.C. budget autonomy. In fact, my predecessor, Tom Davis, continues to fight for budget autonomy as a private citizen. I regret that the Committee has abandoned those bipartisan efforts of the last two Republican chairmen.

In fact, the Committee has gone out of its way to restrict home rule.

Last year, the committee and the House, for the first time since 1991, passed a resolution of disapproval on a law passed by the D.C. Council, the Reproductive Health Non-Discrimination Amendment Act. That law prohibits employers from discriminating against employees based on their reproductive health decisions. More recently, House Republicans passed for the second time this Congress a misguided D.C. voucher bill that was not only not requested by the District but also has failed to deliver educational results. Chairman Chaffetz also threatened jail time for D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser for implementing the city's marijuana legalization law, which was adopted by referendum.

On the policy of budget autonomy for the District, there is no serious dispute. In fact, the D.C. Superior Court recently upheld the District's Budget Autonomy Act, which was approved by votes in 2013. While some disagree about how to achieve it, all, including I think most of the witnesses here today, agree on the policy of budget autonomy for the District. It's shameful that the community housing the federal government is not afforded the same rights to self-governance as all others across the country.

It is time for Congressional Republicans to get on board, and this is one case in which I would welcome their adherence to their conservative principles. Either get out of the way and let the court decision upholding budget autonomy stand, or

work with us in bipartisan fashion to legislatively grant that authority. It's the right thing to do for the residents of D.C.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

---

Contact: Jennifer Werner, Communications Director, (202)226-5181