

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Opening Statement Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings

H.R. 5233, Clarifying Congressional Intent in Providing for DC Home Rule Act of 2016

May 17, 2016

Mr. Chairman, I strongly oppose this bill, which would repeal the District's Local Budget Autonomy Act and prohibit D.C. from passing such laws in the future.

I want to express my disappointment that some Members have threatened jail for D.C. employees who implement the Autonomy Act.

The threat is backward. In fact, District officials may face jail time for not implementing the Autonomy Act. The only court ruling in effect on this law upheld it and ordered all District employees to implement it.

The Committee has taken a regrettable turn in its approach to D.C. home rule.

The last four chairmen, including Republicans Tom Davis and Darrell Issa, tried to give the District more home rule—including budget autonomy—not less.

In this Congress, the Committee has passed legislation to overturn a District law that prohibits employers from discriminating against employees for their reproductive health decisions. The majority also launched an investigation of the District's marijuana legalization initiative and threatened the mayor with jail for implementing it.

We hear a lot of rhetoric from the majority in support of devolving authority to local governments.

Yet this bill tramples on a local government and the will of local citizens expressed in a referendum.

This bill is not only unprincipled—it is bad policy. Even as this bill was being drafted, the majority's own hearing witnesses were calling for D.C. budget autonomy.

Mr. Chairman, if the Committee insists on marking up this bill, I hope at the next markup we consider a bill to give D.C. budget autonomy.

That would not only be just, it would be wise.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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