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# Department of Justice

## STATEMENT

by

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS  
of the  
SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

on

S. J. RES. 80, to provide for D. C.  
representation in Congress

November 8, 1967

With 800,000 residents, Washington, D. C., is more populous than any state when the republic was founded and 11 states today.

Citizens of the District carry all the burdens of citizenship. Figures for fiscal 1965 show that only 12 states exceeded the District in per capita tax revenue. The number of civilian residents who have served their country in the military is greater than the veteran populations in 11 states.

District residents have all the needs and interests and problems of their fellow citizens in the states. Yet, unlike their fellow citizens, they are denied representation in the Congress.

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Most citizens of the District are no closer to government, except geographically, than are people in other American cities. The 1960 census showed that 63 percent of the working District residents were in non-government jobs. It is a vital city with major commerce and industry.

It is ironic that this very seat of democracy is governed without a voice in its government and taxed without representation. There can be no justification for relegating the interests of its citizens to the care of those in Congress, from states near or far, who may be willing to plead their cause. Even if their needs are generously met, this is not the proper estate for citizens of a democracy. S. J. Res. 80 would right this ancient wrong.

It would assure the people of the District one voting member of the House of Representatives. Congress would have authority to extend that representation in either or both Houses, up to the representation to which residents of the District would be entitled if they were residents of a State.

The resolution would confer on the Congress the power to enforce the Article by appropriate legislation. Such legislation would cover the qualification of voters and of Representatives and Senators to be elected from the District; the time, manner, and place of holding elections; the manner in which vacancies are

to be filled; and the rights, privileges, and immunities of the Representatives and Senators elected from the District.

On adoption, Congress would make appropriate adjustments in related laws. For example, it would determine whether the membership of the House should be increased permanently by the number of Representatives to be elected from the District of Columbia. It might decide, as was done on the occasion of the admissions of Alaska and Hawaii, that such increase would be temporary and the membership of Congress restored to the statutory figure of 435 after the next decennial census.

The Article would have no effect on the provision in the Twenty-third Amendment for determining the number of electors for President and Vice President to be appointed for the District.

In proposing this resolution, the Administration continues to support pending proposals to provide the District with a non-voting delegate in the House. A delegate now, as an interim measure, would provide the District an opportunity to be heard in the Congress pending ratification of the constitutional amendment. The legislation is no substitute for S. J. Res. 80, for true democratic representation pre-supposes the power to participate in decisions, not mere deliberations.

S. J. Res. 80 recognizes that the right to vote is the last we should ever withhold, because it can protect all others.

The Department of Justice urges its enactment to eliminate the anomaly of denying citizens in the national capital representation in their own legislature. By this means, we will remove a glaring inequity in our democratic form of government.