

INTRODUCTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEMOCRACY 2000 ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Wednesday, January 6, 1999*

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the first bill in my D.C. Democracy Now Package. The bills to follow, as many as half a dozen, will be introduced at appropriate times throughout the 106th Congress.

The purpose of the first of these bills, the District of Columbia Democracy 2000 Act (D.C. Democracy 2000) is to ensure that the new city administration has sufficient control of the District government to be held accountable in preparation for the expiration of the control period. Among the other bills that will be included in the Package are: D.C. Budget Autonomy Act; D.C. Legislative Autonomy Act; D.C. City Employee Tax Fairness Act (Commuter Tax for District Government Employees); and Delegate Vote Restoration.

I am introducing D.C. Democracy 2000 first because it is the most urgent. This bill is essential to assure the stable transition to full self-government already begun by the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority. The heart of D.C. Democracy 2000 is the early return of Home Rule, allowing the Authority to expire a full year ahead of schedule. At the time that the Authority Act was passed, the District's insolvency led the Congress to estimate that it would take four years of balanced budgets to achieve the necessary stability. However, the District's reforms have far outstripped the estimate of Congress. It now seems clear that by Fiscal Year 2000 the District shall have had three consecutive years of balanced budgets. If the failure to achieve balanced budgets could delay the return of Home Rule, it should follow that the prudence reflected in continuous years of surpluses should be equally recognized. Further delay is especially unwarranted in light of the continued oversight of the City Council and Congress.

The District has just revolutionized its political culture by election of a new Mayor who earned his stripes as a tenacious Chief Financial Officer who cut budgets, prevented overspending, and helped create surpluses. To match the new Mayor, a new City Council has already shown a new, strict approach to oversight that holds the executive and the city agencies accountable. Moreover, the District has used most of its surplus revenues to pay down its accumulated deficit. As a result, the District is expected to eliminate its operating deficit without using the authority to borrow, that Congress granted the city in the Revitalization Package in 1997. This is performance that not only deserves recognition, it is performance that deserves encouragement by the return of authority that was stripped away only because of a fiscal crisis. Needless to say, it would lift the spirits of District residents to begin the Year 2000 with Home Rule restored.

The bill also includes a section that would give the Mayor authority to hire and fire department heads. This section carries out the purpose of the Authority Act "to ensure the most efficient and effective delivery of services, by the District government during a period of fiscal emergency." P.L. 104-8, Title I

§ 2(b)(2). On January 2, Alice Rivlin, for the Authority, signed a memorandum of agreement delegating authority to the Mayor to run the District government to the fullest extent allowed by existing law. Viewed from the front lines of the District government's present progress, the Authority's considered judgment was that a transition to Home Rule through the delegation of power to the new Mayor was necessary in advance of the transfer of ultimate power at the end of the control period; a clean line of reporting authority unmistakably identifying the responsible officials was necessary for efficient and effective government operational reform; and Mayor Williams, in his role as Chief Financial Officer, had already demonstrated his capacity to administer complicated operations.

This section amends existing law to complete a transfer of power that the Authority desired but could not make because of the wording of the statute. The Authority transferred to the Mayor its jurisdiction over nine operating agencies, but believed it was unable to return that authority to hire and fire department heads. In returning this power, this section seeks to enhance and facilitate the Mayor's ability to control managers. It eliminates the possibility of an illusion of an appeal to a higher authority beyond the Mayor to acquire or retain a position.

The advantage of having a government that knows that it and it alone will be fully accountable cannot be overestimated in a democracy. Whatever justification some may have found for the denial of self-government has been stripped away by the growing fiscal health of the District government and its prudence in management of its finances and operations. Beyond securing more revenue, city officials have already shown that they know what to do with it. Their decision to use surplus revenues to pay down the city's accumulated deficit demonstrates they can and will make tough financial choices. In the face of the sacrifices that District residents have made and the unanticipated surpluses that have been produced, there is no justification for delaying a return to coherent and fully accountable self-government.

A TRIBUTE TO CASA LARIOS AND THE LARIOS FAMILY

HON. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Quintin and Maria Teresa Larios. The owners and operators of some of the best Cuban restaurants in the United States, Casa Larios, Larios on the Beach and Bongos Cuban Cafe.

I believe that Quintin and Maria Teresa typify the dream of so many who spend countless hours working hard in the food service industry—to open their own restaurant.

The Larios came to the United States in 1973, after first fleeing Cuba and then living in Spain, and their culinary skills expertly reflect their Cuban heritage. The couple worked in the restaurant business in Miami for 12 years, gaining valuable experience before embarking on their own venture.

Casa Larios opened in 1988, and in the tradition of Cuban restaurants, Maria Teresa

worked out front with the customers while Quintin took over the kitchen as chief.

As its popularity has grown, the Larios expanded by opening a location in South Beach as well as Disney Downtown in Orlando. The popular vocal artist, Gloria Estefan, liked Casa Larios so much that she and her husband, Cuban-American entrepreneur Emilio Estefan, joined the Larios in the ownership of the South Beach and Orlando locations, Larios on the Beach and Bongos Cuban Cafe.

When Casa Larios outgrew its original location on West Flagler Street in Miami earlier this summer and moved a few blocks down the street, the Larios gave interested customers pieces of the memorabilia depicting the republican era in Cuba (1902-1959) from newspapers on the restaurant's walls.

We feel very fortunate to have such excellent cuisine in South Florida and I congratulate Maria Teresa and Quintin on their well-deserved, extraordinary success.

ELIMINATE THE FAA'S LIAISON AND FAMILIARIZATION TRAINING PROGRAM

HON. RAY LAHOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to the frequent flyer program that is currently being run down at the Federal Aviation Administration. But unlike other frequent flyer programs, you don't have to earn your free flight in this program—all you have to do is sign up. What I am referring to, of course, is the FAA's Liaison and Familiarization Training Program (FAM), a program that was originally created to give air traffic controllers an awareness of, and familiarization with, cockpit and pilot procedures by allowing them to ride in the cockpit's jump seat. This program, while laudable in purpose, has unfortunately turned into a "popular perk" for FAA employees who are more interested in getting free air travel for vacations and personal reasons than they are in observing and learning about cockpit and safety procedures. The abuses of this program were so bad, in fact, that the Inspector General of the Department of Transportation recently recommended a number of reforms be made to the program. It is, in the words of one airline's slogan, becoming obvious that FAA employees love to fly, and it shows. Today, I am introducing a bill that will implement the Inspector General's reforms in order to curb the rampant and widespread abuse of the FAM program by FAA employees.

In an August 3, 1998 memo to Jane Garvey, the FAA Administrator, Kenneth Mead, the DOT's Inspector General (IG), reiterated his concern over the "serious, continuing, and widespread lapse of ethics in the Liaison and Familiarization program (FAM)." This program, which dates back to the 1940's, was originally created in order to allow FAA employees, particularly air traffic controllers, to ride in an airline cockpit's jump seat in order to become familiar with the environment in which pilots operate. However, over the past two decades this program has been increasingly misused by employees. And, I don't think I need to remind you, Mr. Speaker, that accepting gifts of

free travel is in direct contravention to a host of laws, regulations, and executive orders.

Among the rampant abuses that were detailed in a February 20, 1996 IG report were the following: an employee that took 12 weekend trips in a 15-month period to visit his family in Tampa, Florida; an employee that took 10 weekend trips in a 9-month period to visit the city where he ultimately retired; an employee that took 7 trips to Fort Myers or Tampa, Florida, and 2 trips to Las Vegas, Nevada, utilizing weekends and regular days off to travel; travel by an employee that utilized annual leave or regular days off to take 7 trips to Los Angeles, California, and 1 trip to Munich, Germany; an employee that took 17 trips to travel to his military reserve duty stations; and 7 couples that took 21 flights for extended weekends and vacations. And, according to an article published in the Washington Post, 247,840 authorizations for travel under the auspices of this program were issued by the FAA between January 1993 and April 1994. Unfortunately, the FAA failed to act on this 1996 report, and that is why I am introducing legislation that will reform this program so that these abuses and ethical violations will not occur in the future.

The Inspector General's August 3 memo makes several recommendations for reform. I believe these recommendations are valid, reasonable, and absolutely necessary in order to curb the ethical lapses that have occurred, while still preserving the program's valuable training and safety benefits. My bill simply adopts the recommendations of the Inspector General and requires the FAA to transmit a report to Congress on the implementation of these reforms. Specifically, the IG's report makes the following recommendations precluding FAM travel that "(1) involve travel on leave days or days off; (2) involve scheduled leave of days off between the outgoing flight and the return flight except when management makes an affirmative documented determination that such is for legitimate purposes and will not create an appearance of impropriety; or (3) involve foreign overseas travel for an employee in a facility that does not work oceanic airspace." In addition, the IG report makes the further recommendation that "appropriate controls must require preapproval of FAM flights by supervisory personnel and only then when the supervisor determines that the specific flight meets official training needs of the FAA."

It is time that we reform this program. The abuses have gone on far too long, so long, in fact, that the program is considered an entitlement by air traffic controllers in their contract negotiations with the FAA. This program has, according to the IG, become "what is widely understood to be a popular 'perk' for many FAA employees"—a perk that I believe needs to end.

THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MORRISTOWN JEWISH CENTER—BEIT YISRAEL, COUNTY OF MORRIS, NEW JERSEY

HON. RODNEY P. FRELINGHUYSEN

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 100th Anniversary

of the Morristown Jewish Center—Beit Yisrael, County of Morris, New Jersey.

The Jewish community in Morristown first began meeting in the home of Abraham Mintz and for several years, held Hebrew school classes and religious services there. At that time Morristown was very underdeveloped and this meeting spot was quite inconvenient to access. Over the next several years, the Center relocated to several facilities including Eureka Hall, the Masonic Hall, Lippman Hall, Miller Hall and the estate of Heyward G. Hemmel.

The organization thrived throughout the first quarter of the century and offered numerous benefits of the surrounding community. During the 1920's the Rabbi Signer established the Jewish Center League for religious, cultural, physical and social purposes. In order to suit the diverse needs of the League, a new building was sought. With the help of local department store owner, Maurice Epstein, the cornerstone was laid on March 3, 1929 for a new multipurpose meeting space on Speedwell Avenue in Morristown.

In the 1950s, the Center enjoys a rather unique feature in that it housed Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Congregations with the building. As a result, it served as a model for like-sized communities throughout the nation.

The Morristown Jewish center has continued to grow throughout the century and continues its mission of the founders by being the religious, educational and social core of the Morristown Jewish community. Currently, 430 families comprise the membership of this prestigious congregation.

Mr. Speaker, for the past 100 years, the Morristown Jewish center has prospered enormously in order to unite the community and will continue to do so for many years to come. Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my colleagues to congratulate the members of the Morristown Jewish Center—Beit Yisrael, on this special anniversary year.

THE Y2K MILLENNIUM BUG

HON. JOHN LINDER

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 359 Days, 11 Hours, 32 Minutes, and 26 Seconds until the Year 2000 computer problem affects computers and computer chips worldwide on the morning of January 1, 2000.

As we know, many computers will be unable to process dates beyond December 31, 1999, making the year 2000 indistinguishable from the year 1900. The potential technological turmoil could cause computers to generate incorrect data or stop running. Credit cards, ATM cards, security systems, hospital equipment, telephone service, electricity, and paycheck systems could be affected. I don't think anyone is sure what will happen.

Fortunately, in the year 2000, we have a few days to recover after the Y2K problem hits because January 1st falls on Saturday. However, we lose one potential additional day because the New Year's Day holiday—by law—must be observed on the previous Friday, December 31, 1999.

I have re-introduced legislation that will provide the public and technology professionals with an additional day, prior to the start of the first workweek in January 2000, to work on repairs on failed computer systems caused by the Year 2000 computer problem. My proposal will move the New Year's Day holiday in the year 2000 to Monday, January 3, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, congressional committees have been successfully working to prepare the nation for Y2K, and this is just another proposal that may help ease the difficulties we face. It is not a silver bullet to solve the problem. It is vital that all businesses and government agencies continue to mobilize and work to repair computers in the remaining 359 days before the Y2K problem strikes. This proposal simply ensures that businesses, the public and computer experts have an additional 24 hours to respond to problems that may arise.

STATEMENT ON THE ARTICLES OF IMPEACHMENT

HON. JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1999

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose the Articles of Impeachment before this House. I urge Members to step outside the passion of your convictions and think about our obligations to the Constitution, to our constituents, and our place in history.

Mr. Speaker, I hoped this moment could be avoided and that Members of the Judiciary Committee, after carefully examining the evidence, history and their consciences, would recognize that the charges do not rise to the level of an impeachable offense. With this vote, we have the opportunity, by censure, to live up to the Framers' vision and honorably close a sad chapter in our Republic's history, or open a new, more perilous one in which the private lives of public figures become fair game for scrutiny and prosecutorial entrapment.

The House Judiciary Committee process was unfair. It relied exclusively on material gathered by the Independent Counsel and failed to interview material witnesses or submit them to the rigors of cross examination.

Some Committee members abandoned the most fundamental precept of fairness—the presumption of innocence. While paying homage to the law and constitutional responsibilities, some of our colleagues are even pointing to the President's unwillingness to give up his constitutional right to avoid self-incrimination by demanding that he admit to perjury.

Can we call this process fair?

The shortcomings of our process: abrogation of basic tenets of jurisprudence; an unfair and flawed process; reliance on hearsay; abandonment of the presumption of innocence; and release of materials in a prejudicial manner indicate the need to exercise great caution.

Do we really think these charges rise to the level of impeachable offenses envisioned by the Framers? I fear we are falling victim to what Alexander Hamilton called "the greatest danger"—the danger of partisan impeachment.

Mr. Speaker, the American people and history will judge us!