# EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

## INTRODUCTION OF THE WASHINGTON, D.C. ADMISSION ACT

**HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON**
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, January 4, 2021*

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Washington, D.C. Admission Act with 202 cosponsors, a record number of original cosponsors of the District of Columbia statehood bill. This is the most important bill I introduce each Congress, and it made historic strides in the last Congress. District residents have always been citizens of the United States and pay more federal taxes per capita than the residents of any state, but are the only federal income taxpaying Americans who do not have full and equal citizenship rights. The denial of local control on local matters and of equal representation in Congress can be remedied only by statehood. My introduction of this bill this Congress comes after this Chamber's historic and decisive passage of the Washington, D.C. Admission Act in the 116th Congress. I look forward to building on our historic momentum.

The Washington, D.C. Admission Act creates a state from the eight hometown wards of the District. This 51st state, of course, would have no jurisdiction over the federal district that now consists of the Washington that Members of Congress and visitors associate with the capital of our country. The U.S. Capitol, the White House, the U.S. Supreme Court, the principal federal monuments, federal buildings and grounds and the National Mall would remain in the federal district, which would be called the Capital. Our bill provides that the State of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth would be equal to the other 50 states in all respects, as is always required, and that the residents of the State of Washington, D.C. would have all the rights of citizenship, including two senators and, initially, one House member.

A substantially similar version of the Washington, D.C. Admission Act was the first bill I introduced after I was first sworn in as a Member of Congress in the 102nd Congress in 1991. Our first try for statehood received significant support in the House. In 1993, the House voted on the D.C. statehood bill, which was the first time either Chamber had done so, with nearly 60 percent of Democrats and one Republican voting for the bill. The Senate held a hearing on various approaches to representation for D.C., but the committee of jurisdiction did not proceed further. In the 113th Congress, our statehood bill got unprecedented momentum with the Senate's first-ever hearing on D.C. statehood. That was the first congressional hearing on D.C. statehood in more than 20 years, since the House held a hearing on statehood in 1993. In the 113th Congress, we obtained a record number of cosponsors in the House and Senate, including then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, as well as the other top three Democratic leaders in the Senate. In addition, then-President Barack Obama endorsed D.C. statehood in a public forum before the statehood hearing was held. In the 115th Congress, not only was there a record number of original cosponsors of the bill, with 116 in the House and 18 in the Senate, but also a record number of cosponsors in the House (181) and Senate (30).

The 116th Congress, however, represented a turning point in the march to D.C. statehood. For the first time in American history, a Chamber of Congress voted to make Washington, Douglass Commonwealth the 51st state. We introduced the bill with a record number of original cosponsors in the House (155) and Senate (28), and had, by far, a record number of cosponsors in the House (227), which was more than enough to pass the bill with cosponsors alone, and in the Senate (42). More than 100 national organizations endorsed the bill.

The United States is the only democratic country that denies the residents of the nation's capital both voting rights in the national legislature and local autonomy. We have both the moral obligation and legal authority to end this injustice.

Statehood is the only solution for full and equal citizenship rights for residents of the District. To be content with less than statehood is to concede the equality of citizenship that is the birthright of our residents as citizens of the United States. That is a concession no American citizen has ever made, and one that D.C. residents will not tolerate in their 220th year of fighting for equal treatment in their country. This bill reaffirms our determination to obtain each and every right enjoyed by citizens of the United States, by becoming the 51st state in the Union.

Since the nation's founding, District residents have always carried all of the obligations of citizenship, including serving in all of the nation's wars and payment of federal taxes, all without equal voting representation on the floor in either House of Congress or freedom from congressional interference in purely local matters.

D.C. statehood has both the facts and the Constitution on its side. The Constitution does not establish any prerequisites for new states, but Congress has generally considered three factors in admission decisions: resources and population, support for statehood and commitment to democracy.

D.C. pays more federal taxes per capita than any state and pays more federal taxes than 22 states. D.C.'s population of 712,000 is larger than those of two states, and the new state would be one of seven states with a population under one million. D.C.'s budget is larger than those of 12 states, and D.C.'s bond rating is higher than those of 35 states. D.C. has a higher per capita personal income and gross domestic product than any state. Eighty-six percent of D.C. residents voted for statehood in 2016. In fact, D.C. residents have been fighting for voting rights in Congress and local autonomy for 219 years.

The Constitution's Admissions Clause gives Congress the authority to admit new states, and all 37 new states have been admitted by an act of Congress. The Constitution's District Clause sets a maximum size of the federal district (100 square miles). It does not set a minimum size. Congress previously has changed the size of the federal district, including reducing it by 30 percent in 1846.

I seek statehood for the Americans I am honored to represent. At the same time, D.C. statehood is deeply personal for me. My great-grandfather Richard Holmes, who escaped as a slave from a Virginia plantation, made it as far as D.C., a walk to freedom but not to equal citizenship. For three generations my family has been denied the rights other Americans take for granted. There are many other D.C. residents like me.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

## HONORING JOSEPH A. PROVONCHA, THE MOST SENIOR COUNTY CLERK IN NEW YORK STATE, FOR HIS LONG-TIME SERVICE TO NEW YORKERS

**HON. ELISE M. STEFANIK**
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, January 4, 2021*

Ms. STEFANIK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Joseph A. Provoncha for his service and dedication to his community as the most senior County Clerk in New York State.

Joseph first took office on January 1, 1992 as an Essex County Clerk and was elected to his eighth term in 2019. Joseph is now the most senior County Clerk in New York State. Throughout his career, he has held a variety of different positions in addition to his roles as County Clerk and Agent for the DMV Commissioner; these include Records Management Officer, Commissioner of Jurors, and Commissioner of Youth Services. He has been recognized many times throughout his prominent career being presented with the Liberty Bell Award by the Essex County BAR Association in 1997 and in 2014, the Lifetime Achievement Award by the New York State Association of County Clerks in 2001, and the William H. Kelley Annual Archives Award by the New York State Archives and the Archives Partnership Trust in 2018. He was named Clerk of Year in 1996. Additionally, he served as the Association President of the New York State Association of County Clerks in 2000 and has been serving as the Recording Secretary since 2006.

Joseph's exemplary service is a testament to the character of our North Country neighbors. In his role, he has ensured anyone who walks into the Essex County Clerk's Office leaves with their questions answered and problems solved. His longtime dedication to his role as County Clerk has served the community very well as he has spent his career assisting others navigate the complexities of bureaucracy.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.
Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.

On behalf of New York's 21st District, I would like to thank Joseph for his dedication to serving his community, and I congratulate him for reaching this significant milestone.

## INTRODUCTION OF H.R. 40, COMMISSION TO STUDY AND DEVELOP REPARATION PROPOSALS FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS ACT

### HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, January 4, 2021*

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to announce the reintroduction of H.R. 40, the ''Commission to Study and Develop Reparation proposals for African Americans Act,'' legislation which was cosponsored by 173 Members in the 116th Congress and today is being reintroduced with more than 100 original cosponsors.

This legislation was first introduced in 1989 by the late and beloved Congressman John Conyers of Michigan, the former chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, and is intended to examine the institution of slavery in the colonies and the United States from 1619 to the present, and, further, to recommend appropriate remedies.

Since the initial introduction of this legislation, proponents have made substantial progress in elevating the discussion of reparatory justice at the national level and joining the mainstream international debate on the issues.

Though some have tried to deflect the importance of these conversations by focusing on individual monetary compensation, the real issue is whether and how this nation can come to grips with the legacy of slavery that still infects current society.

Through legislation, resolutions, news, and litigation, we are moving closer to making more strides in the movement toward reparatory relief.

Today, there are more people at the table—more activists, more scholars, more CEOs, more state and local officials, and more Members of Congress.

However, despite this progress and the election of the first American President of African descent, the legacy of slavery lingers heavily in this nation.

While we have focused on the social effects of slavery and segregation, its continuing economic inequalities and disparities remain largely ignored by mainstream analysis.

These economic issues are the root cause of many critical issues in the African American community today, such as education, healthcare and criminal justice policy, including policing practices.

The call for reparatory justice represents a commitment to entering a constructive dialogue on the role of slavery and racism in shaping present-day conditions in our community and American society.

H.R. 40 is important and needed legislation because it goes beyond exploring the economic implications of slavery and segregation.

It is a holistic bill in the sense that establishes a commission to examine the moral and social implications of slavery.

Madam Speaker, the United States is the world's only superpower and boasts the largest economy in the history of the world and for many years was the world's indispensable nation and the example that all aspiring democracies wished to emulate.

At the same time, this nation has also been home to many searing instances of social unrest resulting from racial injustices, as we are now witnessing on the streets of big cities and small towns in urban and rural communities.

We are seeing Americans, by the millions, across the country, coming from all races and ages, engaging in what the late John Lewis called ''good trouble'' by protesting and demanding an end to the systemic racial inequality in our criminal justice system that too often victimizes and disproportionately treats black Americans worse, ceteris paribus, when it comes to suspicion, apprehension, arrest, detention, trial, sentencing, and incarceration.

While the brutal deaths of George Floyd in Minneapolis and Breonna Taylor in Louisville shocked the conscience of the nation, most black Americans will tell you what they experienced is not new, but has been occurring for generations, if not centuries.

What is critically important to understand is that the instances of brutal and unfair treatment the nation has witnessed this year cannot be attributed to the proverbial few ''bad apples in the bushel'' but is instead the foreseeable consequence of systemic racism and racial inequality in the system.

Not just the criminal justice system, but the health care system, the economic system, and the educational system to name the most glaring examples.

To find our way out of this dark time, we need to understand how it came to be.

That is the purpose of H.R. 40, which establishes a commission to examine slavery and discrimination in the colonies and the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies.

Among other requirements, the commission shall identify (1) the role of federal and state governments in supporting the institution of slavery; (2) forms of discrimination in the public and private sectors against freed slaves and their descendants; and (3) lingering negative effects of slavery on living African-Americans and society.

Truth and reconciliation about the Original Sin of American Slavery is necessary to light the way to the beloved community we all seek.

The uncomfortable truth is that the United States owes its position as the most powerful nation in the world to its slave-owning past.

Initially, slavery in America was not instituted for black people.

The colonists in the southern states simply wanted persons to cultivate and hue the soil of the New World's wild untamed lands.

And they wanted to exploit these boundless natural resources as cheaply as possible.

At first, they tried to enslave the indigenous persons they found when they arrived from Old World but that did not work because the native persons they encountered were nomadic rather than agrarian.

So next, landowners turned to poor persons from Europe arriving to work as indentured servants, but this did not work either for several reasons.

First, such persons were not as hardy in working under the difficult conditions that existed.

Also, because as subjects of the British Crown, indentured workers enjoyed legal rights and protections.

Finally, being white themselves, European indentured servants could escape and blend into the general colonial population.

That is why the landowners set their sights on the western coast of Africa and its people.

That experiment in trafficking in persons failed as well and culminated in a bloody Civil War, but not before America profited handsomely from what President Lincoln rightly characterized in his Second Inaugural as ''the bondsmen's two-hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil.''

Slavery helped make America an industrial nation but at the cost of inflicting physical, economic, social, psychological, and political damage on Black Americans that despite the progress that has been made continues to this day with stark racial disparities in health care, employment, housing, food, education, and indeed nearly every aspect of American life and death.

Madam Speaker, official slavery ended with the Civil War and ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment.

But unofficial slavery was continued with the new institution of sharecrop farming, a criminal justice system that would press convicts into work once done by slaves, and labor policies that dictated income for work done based upon skin color.

And, of course, all of this was reinforced by the systematic disenfranchisement of Black Americans, the ''discrete and insular minority'' excluded from ''those political processes ordinarily to be relied upon to protect'' them, to quote Chief Justice Hughes' famous Carolene Products Footnote 4.

For these reasons, the history of the United States is intertwined with the history of enslaved Africans in the Americas.

Madam Speaker, there is blood and there are tears, but there is also redemption and reconciliation.

But to get there, we must know the complete truth and lay our history bare.

The Commission created and empowered by H.R. 40 is a necessary first step in that effort.

I encourage all Members to join me in cosponsoring H.R. 40, the ''Commission to Study and Develop Reparation proposals for African Americans Act.''

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, January 4, 2021*

Mr. HUFFMAN. Madam Speaker, I regret that due to a scheduling conflict on January 3, 2021, I was unable to cast the following vote. Should I have been present, I would have voted YEA on roll call 3.

## HONORING THE LIFE OF AMEER K. EDWARD

### HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, January 4, 2021*

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Ameer K.