With strong opposition to this bill, I urge my Republican colleagues to step back and actually work with us to lay forward common sense implementations of care and safety for our fellow Americans.

OPPOSITION OF H.J. RES. 24—DISAPPROVING THE ACTION OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COUNCIL IN APPROVING THE LOCAL RESIDENT VOTING RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT OF 2022

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 7, 2023

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.J. Res. 24—Disapproving the action of the District of Columbia Council in approving the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2022.

H.J. Res. 24 will overturn the Local Resident Voting Act of 2022, a measure passed by will of the people in the District of Columbia Council.

This overreaching resolution seeks to overturn the will of Washington DC people, who voted to support the rights of noncitizens who fulfill residency and other requirements to vote in district local elections under the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2022.

Let the record be clear, Mr. Speaker, the United States Constitution does not forbid noncitizens from casting their vote In local, state, or federal elections.

At least 15 cities currently allow non-citizens to cast ballots in local elections.

While voting in federal elections was made illegal for noncitizens in 1996, the legal voting of noncitizens in American elections has a long history in this nation.

Noncitizens were occasionally permitted to cast ballots in local, state, and federal elections in 40 states from the time of the nation's inception until 1926.

During the early years, the District of Columbia Organic Act of 1801 granted Congress sole power over the district's boundaries, depriving its citizens of the voting privileges they had previously enjoyed as residents of Maryland and Virginia.

Due to its treatment as a U.S. territory rather than a state, the District of Columbia has no voting representation in Congress and is certainly not given its fair amount of federal funding—despite the fact that Washington DC residents pay more federal taxes per person than citizens of any other state, and more than residents of 22 states combined.

It is no secret that when politicians seek to suppress voting rights, the feared component of increased racial political power rears its ugly head in driving and motivating shifts in laws that will eliminate or stunt the political growth of minority populations in America.

As we stand here today, marking the first week of Black History Month, we must acknowledge that we are standing in a building built by the hands of slaves, and we are standing in a city that is not only one of the most diverse cities in the country, but is also home to one of the largest Black populations—yes, Washington, DC—our nation's capital.

The underrepresentation of Blacks and minorities in our nation's capital and in our national democratic systems is a shameful stain on our morals and values as Americans.

We must put an end to current and historical voter suppression and we must stop pushing oppressive and systemically racist policies if we are ever to truly be a nation united by our democratic pillars and principles.

The nearly 700,000 D.C. residents, a majority of whom are Black and Brown, are worthy and capable of self-government.

And Congress, which is not accountable to D.C. residents, should not interfere with legislation duly enacted by the duly elected D.C. government.

Members of Congress should not substitute their policy judgment for the judgment of D.C.'s elected officials.

Quite simply, Congress should keep its hands off D.C.

The legislative history and merits of the two bills enacted by D.C. that are the subject of the disapproval resolutions—the Revised Criminal Code Act and the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act—should be irrelevant to the consideration of these disapproval resolutions, since there is never justification for Congress nullifying legislation enacted by D.C.

That being said, we need to set the record straight on these two bills enacted by D.C.

Under the D.C. Home Rule Act, which was passed by Congress, D.C.'s legislature, the 13-member D.C. Council, is required to pass legislation twice, with at least 13 intervening days between each vote, to enact legislation.

Legislation passed by the Council and signed by the D.C. mayor (or with a veto override or without the mayor's signature) is transmitted to Congress for a review period.

The legislation takes effect at the expiration of a review period, unless a resolution of disapproval is enacted into law during the review period.

And yet, the House did not hold a hearing or markup on either disapproval resolution.

This resolution cannot stand as a serious policy measure to be respected on the floors of this chamber, and must be opposed.