Delegate candidate questionnaire
2022 Democratic Primary
March 2022

Thank you for your interest in DC for Democracy's questionnaire for candidates running for Delegate in the June 2022 Democratic primary. As a Candidate, you're invited to complete the following questions to help voters understand why you are the best choice to be DC's next Delegate.

Responses should be submitted to dcfordemocracy@gmail.com and are due by Friday, April 8, 2022, at 5:00 pm. We will publish the full answers to all responses.

Candidate name: Rev. Wendy Hamilton

1. What are your top three goals as Delegate for the 2023-2024 Congressional term?
   - Implement First 51 Plan (A Progressive plan for my First 51 days in office):
     - Energize DC residents around Statehood
     - Extend the UDC Workforce Development Program
     - Revitalize the DC Jail System
     - Call for a US Postal Service Hearing
     - Establish Constituent Services Offices in all 8 Wards
     - Appoint an NPS Community Liaison and Review Board
     - Explore Universal Basic Income in the District
   - Continue DC Statehood Fight
   - Introduce Ranked-Choice Voting
2. **In light of obstruction in the U.S. Senate, how do you plan to move forward on DC statehood legislation?**

If elected Delegate as a Progressive candidate in DC, I will continue fighting for DC’s rights as a champion for Statehood. We need to continue building relationships and speaking with senators like Manchin and Sinema, educate Americans across the country about the 700K of us DC residents who have little to do with the leaders elected in Congress and the White House, and work across the aisle with Republicans on Statehood. As a Progressive Democrat, I’ve collaborated with DC Republicans on pro-statehood op-eds, proving it’s possible to achieve common ground when you have a leader who’s willing to appeal to the humanity in others, which is the leadership I’ll deliver with your support.

3. **The Senate, which is currently controlled by Democrats, passed a budget that retained the budget riders introduced by Rep. Andy Harris that infringe on DC’s local autonomy. How do you plan to respond to this betrayal by Democratic Senators?**

It is unacceptable how Rep. Harris is trying to hold back DC’s autonomy by preventing DC from using local funds to establish a locally commercial recreational marijuana industry. As your Delegate, I will write counter legislation and persuade Rep. Harris to remove the rider.

I believe that maintaining Rep. Harris’ rider is anti-democratic and misses an opportunity to right a wrong around local governance and self-determination for Americans in DC. As the DC Delegate, one of my main powers is the ability to persuade Congress on issues that are important in the District. The rider puts DC in a regulatory no man’s land concerning the sale of marijuana, which more than 70% of Americans support legalizing. The city is ready for this implementation, the only hurdle left is Congress. We need a bold leader with the courage to move Rep. Harris to an agreement that favors DC’s marijuana legalization and autonomy.
4. **There is a significant risk of GOP takeover of the U.S. House of Representatives next year, with attendant threats to DC Home Rule. How do you plan to address this threat?**

We live in an atrocious time when Republicans are threatening DC home rule just to win political points. Some Americans don’t seem to understand that there’s a difference between “Washington” (i.e., the political center that’s failing them) and “DC” (i.e, the 700K of us who are just living our lives and paying our taxes without representation). In my first year as a Delegate, I want to launch a political thought leadership campaign that educates Americans about the DC existing beyond the Hill and Pennsylvania Avenue, to build empathy for DC.

I want to transform the political market so it’s no longer an attractive shot for Republicans, Democrats, or the Federal government to hold our people hostage from representation. Building onto my goals to educate and energize DC residents about Statehood (Question 6), I would build empathy, awareness, and understanding across the country for DC Statehood, which would unlock support missed by our current Delegate, who for 30 years has only focused on elected leaders, who are the most difficult lever to pull when the country is divided on this issue. She’s working hard, but DC has to start working *smart* on Statehood.

Any threats to DC Home Rule only reinforce the need for DC Statehood, because it’s just another example of Federal overreach into our District. Home rule should stand until we get Statehood, and I will fight all GOP efforts to dismantle DC’s autonomy, because we are taxed more than any other state and we can fully govern ourselves within our jurisdiction.

5. **The Southwest development at the Wharf was one of the most significant land transfers from the federal government to the District of Columbia and it spurred a massive economic development project. We now have the prospect of another major land transfer: the RFK Stadium site. What lessons have you
DC’s Wharf looks beautiful, but it displaced people and businesses – especially DC natives who were systemically priced out of their own neighborhoods – because of gentrification. Going forward, economic development projects need the community buy-in of stakeholders who’ll be affected by developments in their neighborhood.

We need to try a new way forward if we want better results.

One of my campaign policies is establishing community-driven project approval boards as a critical piece of the permit and approval process in economic development projects. A key voice that developers need to win-over to compete for permits on public land.

Developers would compete for building permits by presenting project proposals to local civilian boards with equitable voting models reflecting the diversity of the current residents that’d benefit from the mixed-income housing. This ensures that approved project permits reflect the current demographics of a community, rather than higher-end clientele, which incentivizes developers to compete on project models that honestly serve the interests of majority-minority communities, both in cost and quality.

It means that developers would compete to propose development projects that reflect these residents’ needs – taking local stakeholders’ interests directly into account. Not only does my model mean that new housing development models achieve the political buy-in of marginalized communities today; it also means that every new development secures the long-term buy-in of local communities that’ll influence which developers receive permits based on how the developments meet their needs.

I’m getting feedback on this model from constituents and experts across DC - and suggest using the future development of the RFK grounds as a testing bed for this stakeholder-accountable economic development model.
6. **What are the most significant challenges in transitioning to statehood, and how will you ensure that the DC Government and public are planning for this transition?**

Of my first 51 days in office, my plan to address issues like DC Statehood starts on day one. That said, it’ll require coalition building and a lot of hard work over many years—and I intend to do just that. I will focus my first 51 days on energizing our residents around DC Statehood: How could it happen, what might it mean for everyday people, and why is it worth fighting for?

Statehood is not only a moral issue but an effect of federal policy that affects people's lives on a day-to-day basis. How will DC Statehood help residents put food on the table? How will it help people pay their bills, find suitable housing, or send their kids to school? Connecting Statehood to the challenges in DC residents’ daily lives is a huge undertaking; however, these conversations are necessary to advance a DC Statehood movement that brings our communities into the fold.

I’ll kick off an initiative to unify DC residents around becoming a state. As a Delegate, some may think that my power is limited, but as a community leader with a voice in Washington, I believe we can make great strides towards our goal of DC Statehood. We have to galvanize our people to understand how Statehood affects their quality of life; the opportunities in their daily lives. We need to expand our collective conscience of DC Statehood beyond our bumper sticker slogans, and honestly inform and energize our people about why DC Statehood is important. As your DC Delegate, I want us to have honest conversations that put substance behind DC Statehood and build a community-driven movement to move Statehood across the finish line, once and for all.