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. Candidates are 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 5:00pm. We will publish the full answers to all responses.

Candidate name: Kelly Mikel Williams

1. **What are your top three goals as Delegate in the 2023-2024 Congressional term?** Thank you, DC for Democracy, for this opportunity to share a few of the goals that I will seek in my first term in office as Delegate for the District of Columbia. First and foremost, I will seek a resolution to our homeless pandemic. Although we won't be able to put every homeless family or individual in permanent housing, my focus and push will be to have programs in place that seek a solution to this crisis.

I will also introduce the measure to secure full representation for the District of Columbia and all of its citizens. I believe that an education tour with members of the senate as well as the general public across the country will add value to the discussion and help voters understand that the foundation of systemic and structural racism in this country is still very much rooted in the lack of support for statehood and the citizens of the District of Columbia. The reality is that the lack of representation is an economic and constitutional issue that needs a clear and concise narrative to help all voters understand the importance, value, and discriminatory factors of not having full representation and paying taxes greater than twenty-two other states. Helping them see things from our perspective will help them in our pursuits for statehood. Additionally, I'll seek to reduce crime and create jobs, especially for Ward's seven and eight residents.

2. **In light of obstruction in the U.S. Senate, how do you plan to move forward on DC statehood legislation?** As I mentioned, statehood is a goal. Although I’ve heard mixed reviews about it from District residents, I will undoubtedly seek to push legislation forward to acquire statehood. Statehood is a question of educating our
residents and the nation on the purely economic and constitutional ethicacy of 700,000+ American citizens being denied their constitutional rights. I desire to look at several possible solutions to obtaining DC Statehood. The first approach would be to introduce another bill, as done before, and see if congress will take it up and pass it. This will require a significant lobbying effort of Democratic Senators. They currently don’t feel, believe, or want the District to have voting or constitutional rights like they and their constituents now receive. The second approach would be to introduce a constitutional amendment. In the 221 years of trying and the over 150 times legislation has been introduced, only once has a constitutional amendment been sought. And although that amendment ultimately failed in 1985, recent polling shows that a majority of Americans across the country agree that the citizens of the District of Columbia deserve to have their right to representation in congress. Therefore, I will travel the country to educate and empower the voters of America to understand that this fight is about our constitutional right not to be taxed by our federal government without having the right to representation. It’s the law of the land! And that will be my argument. Because that argument isn’t partisan, isn’t racial, it’s economical. And every American can understand and support that because every American at some point has made the statement, “I’m paying too much in taxes!”

As a result, I believe that many Americans, even conservatives, will agree with the principle of being taxed without representation once it’s explained to them in a non-partisan, racial manner, and the mention of Senators is left out of the conversation. And yet another would be to seek a split approach. One on track, which I’ve already started doing, is seeking buy-in from Senators to allow for a vote on the floor without statehood. While the other would be to obtain a Municipal Charter. The first of the two would be to lobby the Senate members, and some have expressed an interest in listening to the approach to allow for a vote on the House Floor without complete statehood. I would seek to negotiate this pathway and allow the transition of the Senate to dictate when I come back with the full request for statehood. The latter would be another approach to Home Rule in a sense, but through an amended charter, although this approach could keep in place congresses veto power, it would give us another opportunity to finesse language that would chip away at congresses hold over the District and allow us to inch closer to our ultimate goal.

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? Betrayal by Democratic Senators isn’t new. Senators Sinema and Manchin have shown that their loyalty belongs to the special interest lining their pockets and paying for the trips, (i.e., GOP lobbyists keen on making sure they stay in line and vote the way Mitch McConnell wants them to). The best way to deal with Democrats that don’t seem to hold to the values and principles of our party, or their constituents is to elect new Democrats and more of them so we can overcome the weak negotiated power balance that was negotiated when
Democrats took over. If it had been Mitch McConnell, there would not have been any 50/50 split on key committees or budget items. McConnell would have laid down the hammer on what he would and would not accept. Democrats would have gone along with it just as they did in allowing 45 federal judges to be confirmed by unanimous consent. They didn’t want to fight over each one, allowing for unqualified 30 somethings to be placed in life tenure positions on the federal bench. Another way of dealing with such weakness is to find issues and legislation that we can use to negotiate a compromise with both Democrats and Republicans.

4. There is a significant risk of a 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? A recent Washington Post article stated that GOP members saw the increase in homelessness and crime as the number one reason they would consider taking over Home Rule from our elected officials. In reading that, my first reaction was here we go again. Like so many District residents, I am sick and tired of this carrot on a string of threats from the GOP. Yet, because it is the Republican Party, you have to take every threat they pose as a serious one, and you cannot overlook it. Therefore, when I read the article and realized what their complaints were, I felt that as DC’s next Delegate, I, better than any of my opponents, could best address their concerns and issues related to homelessness and crime. These are the two top pillars of my platform that I am very focused on and eager to get started with discussing funding options with my desired Committee Chairwoman, Rep. Maxine Waters, and Sub-Committee Chairman, Rep. Emmanuel Cleaver, in addition to the Judiciary Committee or Sub-Committee. Within these committees, I intend to address the issues impacting District residents and work with my colleagues, local organizations and groups, District residents, ANC, Councilmembers, and the Mayor. We’ll take a solutions-based approach to address all of the critical concerns impacting the District of Columbia.

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 drawn from the Southwest redevelopment that would guide your approach to the RFK site land transfer? I think the Warf is a huge development and brings life to the southwest waterfront, especially during the warmer times of the year. I remember what it used to look like twenty years ago.

With the RFK site, one of the major differences is the traffic patterns that already exist for the increased traffic that the SW Waterfront did not include in its plan. With city officials and long-time residents remembering what traffic was like during home games of the former Washington Redskins, the traffic pattern will be the number one concern depending on the final design of the footprint. Other issues and concerns are the lack of participation by African-Americans and Latinos in the contracting of the development. According to people who sought participation, the Warf’s minority participation did not meet the levels it should have. These transfers
are worth hundreds of millions of dollars and turn into billions of dollars in revenue. Shielding small minority businesses out of these contracts or allowing prime contractors to weed them out on technicalities further adds to the wealth gap and the gentrification of minority business participation. The selection of businesses that receive space at the Warf lack minorities as well.

And most importantly for the residents, the affordability to live at the Warf and potentially at the RFK platform will likely be unattainable for most. It’s incredible how we can always find land for developers to build, but we can never find land to provide permanent housing for our homeless, how we can afford to build “affordable” housing for them but not for others. So, my primary focus will be on the process of selection and participation. I want to see the final plans and how they will be administered. I’m going to insist that African-American and Latino businesses, contractors, etc., are fully vesting in the process and that a majority of the housing units meet the demand for affordability. Not based on someone else income but based on the applicants’ income. If we don’t slow the out-of-control costs of living in the District of Columbia, we’ll be a Los Angeles, San Francisco, or New York City, and no one will be able to live here except the Haves because it will make everyone else, a Have Not. And that’s not what America is supposed to be. We just brought in 100,000 refugees from Afghanistan; we’ve given them housing at the University of Maryland and elsewhere, while we have hundreds in Tent Cities all across our nation’s capital. So, if we can do it for them, which I understand completely, then we certainly have the resources to do it for those who have been here sleeping in the cold for months. We have to do better, and we have to get our priorities in place.

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? When the District of Columbia achieves statehood, it will be the most momentous occasion in American history. It will be right there with President Obama’s election and re-election. Vice President Kamala Harris’ election and Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson’s supreme court confirmation. There are others, like John Glen on the moon, the space shuttle, and a few other events that we would all care to forget or not equate to the joyous achievement of our nation’s capital finally getting its just due. Certainly, we must prepare well in advance. Currently, the District is operating under the consideration of a state in that we are subject to some 500 federal laws that states are required to abide by. We’ve drafted a Constitution approved by the city council and the voters. And although there is a quasi-legislative structure on paper, it would need to be implemented. Another challenge to consider will be the function of the council members. Do they automatically become state legislators, or will there be open elections? What about the Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners? Will they stay in place? I will ensure that information, town hall meetings, ANC meetings, news reports, and hearings will take place continuously to ensure that every District resident is informed, educated, and empowered to be able to take advantage of all of the benefits of statehood and is poised and ready for the
responsibilities of it as well. It will be one of my happiest and proudest moments. And with that, I will ardently acknowledge the trailblazer who paved the way for such an accomplishment for the residents of the District of Columbia.