

# The Washington Post

## Budget-slashing legislation is another blow to D.C. self-determination

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A D.C. Statehood supporter in March 2023. (Michael A. McCoy/For The Washington Post)

For the past 50 years, D.C. has followed an unsuccessful strategy in its quest for statehood. In response to habitual intrusions on Washingtonians' rights, we throw ourselves, usually in vain, on the mercy of Congress to save us and disregard the partisanship that stands in the way of our quest for equality. The March 13 Metro article "Bill would radically impact District services" said the House passed a stopgap funding bill that would force D.C. officials to cut \$1.1 billion in local government spending. This is just another example of the repercussions of our disenfranchised citizenship refusing to take more radical, more effective action to secure our rights and representation.

Though we have made progress, persuading lawmakers to twice pass a statehood bill in the House, the roadblock of the Senate, with its filibuster, has proved insurmountable. Until we take action, nothing will change. As Frederick Douglass once said: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." A handful of local leaders and citizens going to the Senate with hat in hand asking for "more please," like some character from a Charles Dickens novel, might be a request, or a plea or an appeal — but it is not a demand.

We must show up en masse, not just with local leaders testifying that Washingtonians pay taxes and deserve representation, but rather rising up as a community and saying enough is enough. If not, we will continue to be bewildered and disappointed, not to mention a billion dollars poorer.

As long as Washingtonians continue to lack the rights of full-fledged U.S. citizens, we are vulnerable to attack, and our recurring anxiety will persist. Only statehood will make us equals, keep our civil liberties safe and keep our right to self-determination intact.

Though we know all this, until we all act, nothing will change. Let's not pass this dysfunctional, undemocratic and repressive political anachronism on to our children.

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