

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE JUDICIARY STANDING COMMITTEE

March 10, 2025

1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Matt Claman, Chair
Senator Jesse Kiehl, Vice Chair
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Löki Tobin
Senator Robert Myers

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 6

Supporting the admittance of Washington, D.C., into the Union as a state of the United States of America.

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SJR 6

SHORT TITLE: WASHINGTON D.C. STATEHOOD

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) TOBIN

01/24/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/24/25	(S)	STA, JUD
02/25/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/25/25	(S)	Heard & Held
02/25/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/04/25	(S)	STA AT 3:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/04/25	(S)	Moved SJR 6 Out of Committee
03/04/25	(S)	MINUTE(STA)
03/05/25	(S)	STA RPT 3DP 2DNP
03/05/25	(S)	DP: KAWASAKI, WIELECHOWSKI, GRAY- JACKSON
03/05/25	(S)	DNP: BJORKMAN, YUNDT
03/10/25	(S)	JUD AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR LOKI TOBIN, District I
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of SJR 6.

MAGGIE GRENIER, Staff
Senator Löki Tobin
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced SJR 6 on behalf of the sponsor.

ANKIT JAIN, Shadow Senator
District of Columbia
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation in support of SJR 6.

PAUL STRAUSS, Shadow Senator
District of Columbia
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified by invitation in support of SJR 6.

BARBARA HANEY, representing self
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SJR 6.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:30:21 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN called the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Myers, Tobin, Stevens, Kiehl, and Chair Claman.

SJR 6-WASHINGTON D.C. STATEHOOD

[1:30:53 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced the consideration of SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 6 Supporting the admittance of Washington, D.C., into the Union as a state of the United States of America.

CHAIR CLAMAN stated this is the first hearing of SJR 6 in the Senate Judiciary Committee. He invited the resolution sponsor and her staff to put themselves on record and begin their presentation.

[1:31:17 PM](#)

SENATOR LOKI TOBIN, District I, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, sponsor of SJR 6, introduced herself.

[1:31:26 PM](#)

MAGGIE GRENIER, Staff, Senator Löki Tobin, Juneau, Alaska, introduced SJR 6, on behalf of the sponsor. She presented a slideshow titled SJR 6: D.C. Statehood.

MS. GRENIER moved to slide 2, D.C. Statehood:

[Original punctuation provided.]

D.C. Statehood

- Shrink current D.C to Federal Land
- Abides to Framers Intent
- Constitutional Amendment Unnecessary

MS. GRENIER said SJR 6 calls on the President and Congress to enact legislation granting statehood to the people of Washington, D.C. The goal of this legislation is to shrink the size of the current federal District of Columbia to include only federal lands and buildings. She drew attention to the maps on slide 2, which showed the boundaries of the proposed areas, stating that the smaller area would include the White House, Capitol Building, U.S. Supreme Court, and National Mall. She said SJR 6 envisions the new state would consist of the residential areas of Washington, D.C. This area has a population of about 712,000, which is greater than that of Vermont and Wyoming.

MS. GRENIER said Washington, D.C. statehood would still abide by the framers' intent to keep the nation's capital out of the hands of a single state.

MS. GRENIER said the legislation would not require a U.S. Constitutional amendment. The U.S. Constitution limits the size of the federal district to an area "not to exceed 10 Miles square," but does not specify a minimum size. She said Congress previously shrank the size of the federal district in 1846 without a Constitutional amendment and could do it again.

[1:32:53 PM](#)

MS. GRENIER skipped to slide 4, Taxation:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Taxation

- Pay More in Federal Taxes
- Tax System Ranks 48th overall
- Prohibited to tax income of nonresidents
- High Property Tax
- Taxation Without Representation is wrong

Category	Rank
Overall	48
Corporate Taxes	32
Individual Income Taxes	47
Sales Taxes	41
Property Taxes	48
Unemployment Insurance Tax	25

MS. GRENIER said the people of Washington, D.C. pay more in federal taxes per capita than any other state in the union, even though they do not have full representation in Congress. The District of Columbia's tax system ranks 48th overall on the 2025 State Tax Competitiveness Index report. Federal law prohibits the taxation of nonresident incomes, meaning D.C. workers could benefit from lower income taxes by moving to Virginia or Maryland, even if they continue to work in D.C. The District of Columbia also has one of the highest property tax burdens in the nation.

[1:33:40 PM](#)

MS. GRENIER moved to slide 3, Other Support:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Other Support:

2025 Legislative Session:

We are one of seven: Texas, North Dakota, New Jersey, Montana, Massachusetts, California, and Minnesota

1,069+ Total Compact Elected Official Supporters

44 Total Compact States & Territories

MS. GRENIER stated that more than half of U.S. states and territories have considered supportive measures since 2021, with over 1,000 state legislators expressing support. She explained that D.C. residents rely on citizens from the 50 states to

advocate on their behalf, as they cannot change the status quo themselves.

[1:34:08 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN explained the rationale for SJR 6. She said in 1790, the federal government established the federal district in the District of Columbia. Residents of D.C. pay taxes, vote, and serve on juries, but they are not represented in the U.S. Congress. For more than 200 years, they have been denied a voice in the national government.

SENATOR TOBIN reflected on Alaska's journey to statehood and the early advocates who pushed for statehood when Alaskans had no voice in Congress. She recounted that James Wickersham first proposed Alaska statehood in 1916 and in the 1950s President Truman stood up and fought for fair representation for Alaskans.

SENATOR TOBIN noted that Alaska had its champions, shadow Senators Bill Egan and Ernest Gruening, and shadow Representative Ralph Rivers. Despite Alaskans serving in the military and Alaska's strategic importance to the nation, the state was still denied statehood. Prominent figures such as Eleanor Roosevelt, James Cagney, and John Gunther supported Alaska's statehood. Yet, efforts stalled until a coalition of Senators tied Alaska's fate to Hawaii's and succeeded in securing statehood and fair representation. She said this resolution reflects Alaskan values. This country should not have taxation without representation.

[1:36:59 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN announced invited testimony on SJR 6. He invited Shadow Senator Jain to put himself on record and begin his testimony.

[1:37:14 PM](#)

ANKIT JAIN, Shadow Senator, District of Columbia, United States Senate, Washington, D.C., testified by invitation in strong support of SJR 6. He explained that he is one of two shadow senators elected by District of Columbia residents to advocate for D.C. statehood and represent the district's interests at the national level.

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN urged the committee to vote in favor of SJR 6, which calls for the admission of Washington, D.C. as a state of the United States of America. He said D.C. statehood is not only vital to its residents but also important for all citizens of the nation, including Alaskans, which is one of the

newer states to the Union. Under current law, all of Washington, D.C., is considered part of the federal district. Congress has given authority over this district to local government. He said statehood would preserve a smaller federal district limited to the federal monumental core, including the Capitol, White House, National Mall, and surrounding federal buildings while granting statehood to the city's residential areas. He explained that under the proposed statehood legislation, D.C.'s local government would lose authority over the federal core, which it currently has, and D.C. laws would no longer apply there. Instead, the federal government would have full authority over the land surrounding major federal buildings.

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN said D.C. statehood is the right thing to do. D.C. is home to over 700,000 residents who contribute to the prosperity of this country just as much as residents of any other jurisdiction. Yet, D.C. residents have no voting representation in either house of Congress. Furthermore, while D.C. has a local government, Congress can dictate every law that the local government passes. Most egregiously, Congress has the power to remove our local government altogether.

1:39:33 PM

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN emphasized that the United States is the only representative democracy in the world that does not give voting representation in the national legislature to citizens of its capital city. Instead, citizens of D.C. are treated more like second class citizens, or citizens of a colony. Residents of D.C. bear the responsibilities of citizenship, but do not enjoy the full rights and privileges of that citizenship. He said this is an abrogation of democracy. It has real consequences that impact the lives of American citizens. He cited a recent example in which Congress's federal budget language inadvertently restricted D.C. spending to 2024 levels, forcing the city to consider a billion-dollar midyear cut that would defund schools, housing, and police services. This is only possible because the federal government ultimately controls the D.C. budget and would change with statehood

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN stated that D.C. statehood is not a partisan issue. Across the history of the United States, both Democratic and Republican lawmakers have endorsed and advocated for statehood and voting representation for D.C. residents. These lawmakers include President Eisenhower, President Nixon, and Alaska's own U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski. The Alaskan senator introduced a constitutional amendment in 2009 that called for a first ever voting seat in the House of Representatives for

residents of D.C. He urged members of the Alaska Senate Judiciary Committee to follow in U.S. Senator Murkowski's footsteps and report out SJR 6. It is time to make clear that the residents of the 49th state agree that the people of D.C. deserve to become the nation's 51st state and enjoy the same rights and privileges that all American citizens share.

[1:41:50 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN referred to the proposed smaller federal district map on slide 2, asking if the President and his or her family are the only people who would live in that in area.

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN replied that is correct. The proposed statehood bill includes a provision to address the issue posed by the Twenty-Third Amendment, which currently grants Electoral College votes to residents of the federal district. He said there are a couple of options for resolving this issue. He favors giving the Electoral College votes to the federal district for the candidate who has the most Electoral College votes from every other state, until the 23rd Amendment is repealed.

[1:42:45 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked whether, if that provision were not included, the President could assign himself three Electoral College votes.

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN replied that the bill would not advance without a provision addressing that issue. He said he would not support passage without such a safeguard and emphasized the importance of resolving the problem. He added that the bill includes a provision assigning the federal district's Electoral College votes to the overall winner of the Electoral College, separate from the federal district vote.

[1:43:31 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked about the proposed carve-out of the National Mall, Capitol Hill, and the White House as part of the new federal district. He inquired how other federally owned buildings within the District of Columbia, such as the Smithsonian Institution and cabinet department headquarters, would be handled. He asked how the proposal ensures the federal government retains control of those properties.

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN replied that most federal government buildings used for core federal activities are located close together in a dense area that would remain within the new

federal district and under federal control. He stated that while there may be one or two exceptions, the vast majority of federal buildings would remain within the federally controlled district.

[1:45:13 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN invited the next invited testifier, Shadow Senator Strauss, to identify himself for the record and to proceed with his testimony.

[1:45:20 PM](#)

PAUL STRAUSS, Shadow Senator, District of Columbia, United States Senate, Washington, D.C., testified by invitation in support of SJR 6. He said one of his personal heroes was Senator Ernest Gruening, noting that as D.C.'s senior shadow senator, he stands on the shoulders of Senator Gruening, Senator Egan, and Representative Rivers, who were the first publicly elected shadow congressional delegation in United States history.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS explained that the idea of shadow senators originated in Tennessee and was later used by several states in the early history of the country when many slave states sought to block the admission of free states. He said states such as California, Michigan, and Minnesota used this plan, as did Alaska between 1956 and 1959, when its shadow congressional delegation successfully applied the Tennessee Plan in the twentieth century.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS stated that one argument historically used against Alaska statehood was the significant amount of land that was controlled by the federal government. He said Alaska has a higher percentage of federal land relative to its territory than the District of Columbia does. While most federal buildings would remain within the federal district, there would still be some outside of it, similar to how Alaska contains federal lands despite being a state.

[1:47:17 PM](#)

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS emphasized that the motivation for D.C. statehood is self-determination. He said residents of territorial Alaska had more self-determination than residents of the District of Columbia do today. He stated that while Alaska's territorial legislature could pass its own laws, every law D.C.'s locally elected officials pass must be approved by Congress whose members often lack time or understanding of D.C.'s local issues. He noted that every judge on D.C.'s local courts, including the Family Court, must be appointed by the President, and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. He observed that

senators from Alaska have sat on committees with jurisdiction over D.C. issues when they should have been focusing on the priorities that were important to the people of Alaska and this country.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS stated that Alaskans understand the importance of statehood and the challenges that come without it. He said arguments once made against Alaska statehood are now used against D.C., including claims that it would lean left and counted on to always elect Democrats. He pointed out that Alaska proved such predictions false, as did Hawaii, which was assumed would always vote Republican. Therefore, Congress should not use partisan politics as a predictor of what may or may not be when making a constitutional decision to admit new states.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS said that it is time for the Union to grow again and ensure all Americans have political equality. He expressed appreciation for Alaska's attention to the issue and said he took great inspiration from the statue of Senator Gruening, the only shadow senator represented in Statuary Hall. He said both Alaska and D.C. share parallels, including significant federal land ownership, and he appreciated Alaska's symbolic and practical support for District of Columbia statehood.

[1:51:40 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked how D.C. would handle the differences that typically exist between municipal and state governments if it were to become a state.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS replied in the same way differences are currently handled. He explained that the District of Columbia already operates as a unitary government, simultaneously serving as a state, county, and municipal authority. The district has a unicameral legislature and exercises state-level powers, including issuing its own license plates and enacting criminal laws. It has political subdivisions and maintains 37 advisory neighborhood commissions that function similarly to county commissions. He stated that D.C.'s chief executive is called the mayor only because President Johnson gave that nickname when he replaced a three-member commission with a single appointed executive. He explained that this was a way of advancing self-determination before Congress granted limited self-governance. D.C. voters approved a constitution that would essentially transition the federal district government into a state government. He emphasized that the only change statehood would make is that the non-federal parts of D.C. would no longer waste

Congress's time on purely local issues. Statehood would allow members, such as Alaska's congressional delegation to focus on national issues. He noted that many of these same arguments were made by Alaska's territorial advocates before statehood.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS said D.C. is prepared for statehood, citing its sound well-functioning government, longstanding balanced budget, AAA bond rating, and robust economy. He stated that D.C. would likely become a "donor state," contributing more to the federal government, even as host-state to the federal government, than it receives.

[1:54:33 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS asked whether D.C. statehood would lead to the reestablishment of separate cities and counties to create more localized governments rather than one overarching structure.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS replied not necessarily. He said there are no plans to recreate county-level offices, because the existing system already functions effectively as a combined state, county, and municipal government. Over time, the advisory neighborhood commissions could evolve into more independent entities similar to counties, but that is not necessarily the most important priority. He stated that the immediate goal is exercising self-determination and freeing members of Congress from having to engage in purely local affairs. He said statehood would eliminate the superfluous layer of federal oversight, which occurs after the local process. He said most governance challenges arise at the federal level and should not consume the attention of federal legislators.

[1:56:13 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL observed that one distinction between the District of Columbia's and Alaska's path to statehood is that the U.S. Constitution explicitly calls for a federal district. He cited The Federalist Papers, summarizing James Madison's three reasons for establishing a federal district:

- Ensuring the area was large enough to defend. He said this reason may no longer be relevant given modern federal capabilities.
- No state should be able to hold the national capital in its "thrall," sort of surround or encapsulate the city, and
- Residents of the district would consent to this arrangement through inducements to live there.

SENATOR KIEHL invited the testifiers to share their response to the second and third reasons.

[1:58:11 PM](#)

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS replied that James Madison was an advocate for democracy, equal representation, and opposed taxation without representation. He said the intent of D.C. statehood is not to eliminate the federal district but to reduce its size to the portion that is truly federal. That area would include places where Congress exercises exclusive authority, maintaining its own police, sanitation, and governance.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS explained that the federal district had already been shrunk once, and that same constitutional clause set a maximum size for the federal district, but not a minimum. The area started out as 10 Miles square in the Constitution. In 1846, a large portion on the Virginia side was returned to the Commonwealth of Virginia, establishing a constitutional precedent that the seat of government can be shrunk.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS said the areas that D.C. seeks to admit as the 51st state would consist of the residential, educational, and commercial areas of D.C., such as his home, university, and hospitals. He said none of these places have anything to do with the federal government. The seat of the federal government would be under the exclusive jurisdiction of Congress. When visitors come to Washington, D.C. again, they can visit the federal district and will not have to pay sales tax when they buy gifts at the Smithsonian gift shops or in other exclusively federal areas. However, the rest of the city would be purely nonfederal.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS stated that this statehood proposal aligns with Madison's intention. It ensures that the portion of the city under federal control is the actual seat of government. He compared the arrangement to the Vatican and Rome, where the Vatican operates as a separate sovereign entity within the larger city.

[2:00:45 PM](#)

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN replied that James Madison's concern would be resolved because the federal government would retain control of the land surrounding the U.S. Capitol, the White House, and other federal agency buildings. He argued that if being surrounded by a state posed a problem, that concern exists now. He explained that Maryland and Virginia surround Washington,

D.C. He said they do not pose a threat, and neither would D.C if it became the 51st state.

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN said the Founding Fathers struggled with how to handle the federal district and history reveals conflicting arguments. Founders Fathers expressed concern that the creation of a district housing eventually millions of residents without representation conflicted with the principle of "no taxation without representation."

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN expressed his belief that the Founding Fathers never reached a firm conclusion on how to handle this problem, leaving it to further generations. He said passing the D.C. statehood bill would fulfill the responsibility of preserving federal control over national government buildings while granting full citizenship rights, including voting and self-governance, to D.C. residents. He said that doing so would follow in the footsteps of the Founding Fathers by perfecting American democracy and making D.C. the 51st state.

[2:03:12 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS recalled that in the early history of the United States, President George Washington strongly supported establishing a capital city. He said President Washington became frustrated when Virginia and Maryland initially agreed to donate land for the new capital but later hesitated, until he persuaded them to follow through. He noted that a portion of that land was later returned to Virginia, which made sense since it was no longer needed.

SENATOR STEVENS expressed support for the concept of shrinking the central federal district to only the Capitol and other federal buildings where no one resides except the President. He questioned why, however, given that land had previously been returned to Virginia, the remaining areas could not also be returned to Maryland and Virginia. He asked why the federal district could not simply be shrunken to the government core, with the rest of the land returned to the states that originally provided it.

[2:04:32 PM](#)

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS replied that Virginia got all of it its land back, and it was not because the federal government did not need the land. In fact, the Pentagon and several important federal buildings now sit on that land and continue to function effectively within a sovereign state. He explained that the 1846 retrocession was primarily driven by the politics of slavery.

When a young Congressman named Abraham Lincoln came to the district, he was actually trying to use Congress's oversight powers to abolish the slave trade in the nation's capital. One compromise Congress made was redrawing the district boundaries to remove the slave-trading ports of Alexandria. This compromise thereby excluded slave trade from the capital but continued unimpeded in Virginia.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS stated that returning the remaining portion of the district to Maryland is not a feasible solution for two reasons:

- The transfer would require the consent of the governor of Maryland. Maryland does not want the land back. It does not want to dilute its senatorial representation.
- D.C. residents do not wish to become part of Maryland. They want their own state.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS said Alaska has been a member of the Union since 1959. He pointed out that D.C.'s boundaries with Maryland have existed since 1790, longer than Alaska has been a state and longer than most state boundaries have existed. He said it's a very old state border, and that is why retrocession is not a practical solution.

[2:06:36 PM](#)

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN agreed, stating that recent polling shows strong opposition to merging the District of Columbia with Maryland. He said over 80 percent of Maryland residents surveyed did not want D.C. to be added to their state. Similarly, about 87 percent of D.C. residents voted in favor of statehood during a 2016 referendum.

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN emphasized that D.C. and Maryland have distinct cultures, identities, and values. He stated that advocating for D.C. to merge with Maryland would be deeply unpopular among his constituents. Neither the people of D.C. nor those of Maryland support reunification. D.C. residents want their own state. He said forcing D.C. into Maryland would violate the sovereignty of both jurisdictions.

[2:07:59 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS sought more information about Maryland's concern that reunification would dilute Maryland's congressional representation. He observed that Maryland would not lose any Senate representation and it might actually gain one in the

House with the current population numbers. He then asked how statehood advocates would respond to broader concerns that admitting D.C. as a state would dilute representation for residents of existing states, especially in the U.S. Senate.

[2:08:54 PM](#)

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS replied that Alaska's statehood advocates were likely asked similar questions, such as whether the addition of a new state would diminish the representation of other states. He stated that if the Union had taken that idea seriously, the nation would still consist of only the original 13 colonies. He said the growth of the Union has always strengthened democracy. He compared democratic representation to an orchestra, saying that removing one section weakens the quality of the whole. He added that when all voices are not represented, the country loses the benefit of diverse experiences and ideas.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS said the main opposition to the reunification of D.C. and Maryland has largely come from Maryland's Republican Party, particularly the governor, who are strong opponents of retrocession. Maryland has been Maryland since 1790, without the people who live in Washington, D.C. The residents of D.C. are ethnic Washingtonians. He emphasized that D.C. and Maryland have distinct political and cultural identities and operate under different laws. Forcing D.C. to merge with Maryland would create more problems than it solves and would require Maryland's consent, which is unlikely to be granted. He said the real issue is the lack of self-determination for the American citizens who live in the District of Columbia.

[2:10:52 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS shared a historical narrative about Alaska's path to statehood. He clarified a common misconception, explaining that President Eisenhower was not opposed to Alaska becoming a state. Rather, Eisenhower opposed admitting two more Democrats to the U.S. Senate. At that time, Eisenhower held control of the Senate by only one vote. Alaska's elected leadership, its congressional delegation, governor, and others, were all Democrats. He said the only reason Eisenhower agreed to advance Alaska's statehood was that Hawaii's admission was tied to it, providing a political balance since Hawaii was predominantly Republican at the time. He said that was the political reality for Eisenhower.

SENATOR STEVENS noted that under a Republican president such as Donald Trump, it is difficult to imagine approval of legislation that would likely add two Democratic senators to a narrowly divided Senate. He asked for a response to the nation's current political reality.

[2:12:22 PM](#)

SHADOW SENATOR JAIN replied that he could not predict the future or the possibilities that may arise. He said the resolution before the committee expresses Alaska's enduring position, not one limited to this year or the next. It reflects the belief that whenever the opportunity arises, Washington, D.C. should be admitted into the Union as a state. He encouraged the committee to think broadly and long term, noting that D.C. advocates work continuously to build national support so that when a real opportunity to achieve statehood presents itself, Congress will be ready to act.

[2:13:49 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS referenced a statement by Walter Washington, the first mayor of Washington, D.C., concerning statehood and the proposal to carve out federal buildings within the central area of the city. The first mayor had expressed concern that creating several small federal enclaves throughout the city would undermine its integrity. According to Walter Washington, such an approach would erode the fabric and overall viability of the city itself.

SENATOR MYERS asked the testifier to respond to that perspective.

[2:14:31 PM](#)

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS replied that Walter Washington stands as a historic figure to the people of the District of Columbia. He was a commissioner nicknamed Mr. Mayor, even though most territories, including Alaska, were governed by a governor. He expressed his belief that Walter Washington took home rule as far as he could. Mr. Washington advocated at a time when, in a political environment, just getting from an appointed mayor to an elected one was a dramatic accomplishment. In 1968, when Mr. Washington was first appointed, statehood was not really on the table. It wasn't until 1979 that D.C. residents voted to become a state for the first time. Support for statehood was reaffirmed in a political referendum as recently as 2016, and the majority of D.C. residents continue to support statehood to this day. Walter Washington became a strong advocate for full self-

determination and consistently supported voting representation in Congress, even while he was mayor.

SHADOW SENATOR STRAUSS said the two leading contenders for the 51st state are D.C. and Puerto Rico, and both seem to have many interesting precedents similar to Alaska and Hawaii. A state with a relatively small population, where the federal government controls a lot of the land, and an island nation where people actually spoke a different language and weren't connected to the contiguous United States. He pointed out that many of the arguments against D.C. statehood were similar to those used against Alaska, and many of the arguments against Puerto Rican statehood were similar to those used against Hawaii. Admitting new states to the Union doesn't need to be a partisan issue, and for the people of D.C., that is not what it is about. It's about equality and our self-determination.

[2:18:12 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN opened public testimony on SJR 6.

[2:18:44 PM](#)

BARBARA HANEY, representing self, North Pole, Alaska, testified in opposition to SJR 6, stating she taught at the University of Notre Dame, the University of Illinois, and Eastern Illinois University. She stated that she knew a little bit about the Constitution, emphasizing that the Founding Fathers exercised tremendous wisdom in establishing the District of Columbia. She explained that the District was originally a ten-mile-by-ten-mile area, formed from land taken from both Virginia and Maryland. She stated that if District residents wished to have self-determination, they should, like their Virginia counterparts, return to their original state, expressing confidence that they would be welcomed. She addressed the issue of cultural differences, noting that every state contains cultural distinctions, which are not a valid basis for drawing state boundaries. She asserted that granting statehood to Washington, D.C., would dilute the influence of not only Alaska but of the entire western half of the United States. She testified in opposition to SJR 6 because it is not constitutional; it is against the wisdom of the Founding Fathers; and it shifts the balance of power closer to the East Coast interests.

[2:21:18 PM](#)

CHAIR CLAMAN closed public testimony on SJR 6.

[2:21:40 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS remarked that SJR 6 involved a lot of discussion about carving up D.C. and forming federal enclaves. He asked why this is not specified in the resolution.

[2:21:56 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN replied that she worked with partners and stakeholders to draft the language, and she is happy to evaluate it and consider changes from the committee.

[2:22:16 PM](#)

SENATOR MYERS observed that the federal area, enclave concept is not reflected in the resolution's "Resolved" section. He stated that for the measure to advance, that language needs to be included in SJR 6.

SENATOR MYERS said that, during the discussion on D.C. statehood, it was mentioned that the district has either the highest per capita federal tax rate or ranks among the highest. He asked how much of that figure results from the district and its surrounding area having some of the highest median incomes in the country.

SENATOR TOBIN replied that she will gather that data for the committee.

[2:23:37 PM](#)

SENATOR KIEHL stated that, as he read the language of the U.S. Constitution, it appears there was no way to avoid leaving a federal enclave. It seems to be a given. He said the real question concerns the size of the enclave and how many people would reside there, which seems to be the central focus of SJR 6. He noted that James Madison had emphasized the absolute necessity for the federal government to maintain complete control over its capital, and that every legislature follow suit. He remarked that, in Alaska, the legislature's control does not extend much beyond the curb outside the building.

[SJR 6 was held in committee.]

[2:24:58 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Claman adjourned the Senate Judiciary Standing Committee meeting at 2:24 p.m.