



Sandy Sorensen  
Team Leader and Director

# WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
JUSTICE AND WITNESS MINISTRIES

700 Prospect Ave.  
Cleveland, OH 44115-1110  
Phone: 216.736.3700  
Fax: 216.736.3703

## Witness for Justice #534

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### Don't Tread on DC

**Sandy Sorensen**

The Fourth of July holiday is just around the corner, a good time to celebrate and reflect on our nation's democratic process. Residents of Washington, DC are still waiting for it. Many people do not realize that residents of the District of Columbia - who pay one of the highest per capita federal income taxes in the country, fight in America's wars and serve on juries, generate a higher Gross State Product from private industry than 12 other states - still do not have full voting representation in Congress. Taxation without representation - a rallying call of the Tea Party movement - is alive and well in our nation's capital, but I have yet to see a member of the Tea Party champion this cause. Where is the outrage?!

For over two centuries, residents of the District of Columbia, home to some 500,000 people, a population larger than that of Wyoming and comparable to six other states, have never had a vote in Congress and do not even have a say on issues and decisions affecting their own city. I wonder how that would play in Peoria.

It was only in 1961 that DC residents gained the right to vote for President, and in 1970 gained a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives. In fact, of all the capitals of democratic countries in the world, the United States is the **only** country in which capital district residents do not have full voting rights.

Residents of the District have been little more than a bargaining chip in debates over the federal budget, reproductive choice, public education, gun violence and marriage equality. Earlier this spring, with debate over the fiscal year 2011 federal budget swirling and a government shutdown looming as a result of the political stalemate, President Obama and House Republicans struck a deal that included a funding prohibition on abortion for DC residents and the expansion of a controversial private-school voucher program in the District. As Wade Henderson, president of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, noted in a congressional hearing, “It is enough to make people feel like dumping crates of tea into the Potomac.”

Around the world we see the rise of democratic movements applauded as people claim their voices in the political process. It is a vexing irony that efforts to secure a vote in Congress for residents of the District of Columbia continue to languish on the House and Senate floor. Wade Henderson observes, “Voting is the language of democracy. Without it, citizens of the District of Columbia are the silent voice in the wilderness, spectators to democracy, right in the very shadow of the governing institutions that serve as a shining beacon to the rest of the world.”

This Fourth of July, help bring democracy home. Urge **your** members of Congress to support full voting representation for Washington, D C.

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