

February 07, 2011



COUNCILMEMBER PHIL MENDELSON'S

AT-LARGE UPDATE

Phil Mendelson Introduces the "Department of Forensic Science Act of 2011"

The "Department of Forensic Sciences Act of 2011" establishes an actual Department of Forensic Sciences which will provide forensic laboratory services, research, and scientific investigations and will be housed in the new Consolidated Forensics Laboratory currently under construction in Southwest DC. The newly established department will also oversee the functions, authority, personnel, and funds of the forensic laboratory services currently under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police Department and the Federal Government.

This new Department's personnel will include a Director of Forensic Sciences appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Council, and a Deputy Director as well as other support personnel appointed by the Director. The newly formed department will continue to work in conjunction with the MPD and perform requested lab services to District Government agencies.

A hearing on the issue will be held on Monday, February 7, 2011 at 11:00AM in Hearing Room 412.

. Confirmation Hearing Set for New Chief of the Fire & Emergency Medical Services Department

The confirmation hearing for recently named Fire Chief Kenneth Ellerbe has been set for Tuesday, February 24, 2011 at 3:00PM in Hearing Room 412.

District Mayor Vincent Gray appointed Chief Ellerbe to the position in December of 2010. This is not a new assignment for Chief Ellerbe. He was with the DC Fire Department for 27 years before he left in 2009 to take the job as Fire Chief in Sarasota, Florida. Ellerbe replaced Chief Dennis Rubin who announced his resignation last year.

Our First Quarterly Meeting With ANCs

My first quarterly ANC meeting of the year was held Monday, January 31, 2011 here the Wilson Building. Commissioners were especially excited to meet and have questions answered by Police Chief Cathy Lanier and the command staff. All of the Commissioners were particularly interested in the best way to use the chain of command to help their constituents with law enforcement issues.

Following the question and answer session with Chief Lanier, the newly named Director of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA), Nick Majett, spoke and answered questions. He outlined his vision to make the agency more transparent through the use of technology. He showcased new features added to the DCRA's website.

Additionally, I provided Commissioners with an update on bills and hearings before the Judiciary Committee and the Council.

Finally, commissioners, what agency director or government official would you like to hear from at my next Quarterly ANC meeting? Let me know by contacting me at cduffie@dccouncil.us.

- Please note, those Commissioners interested in touring the Office of Unified Communication can do so by contacting Ms. Wanda Gattison at (202) 730-0503.

The Committee on the Judiciary

I am the Chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary which has oversight of 21 local agencies, the most prominent of which are the Metropolitan Police Department, Fire and Emergency Medical Services, Office of the Attorney General, Office of Administrative Hearings, the National Guard, and the Office of the Medical Examiner. My Committee office is located in Room 109 of the Wilson Building and may be contacted at (202) 724-7808.

Constituent Services Corner

A Northwest resident called my office frustrated because her 85-year-old next door neighbor's house was heavily infested with bedbugs and those bugs had traveled and were now infesting their home. They had contacted several District Government offices to request help but no one was able to assist them.

My office immediately contacted the 85-year-old woman's case manager with the Office on Aging and insisted they provide her with the services necessary to clear her home of the bedbugs. That day, the case management team went to the senior's home, moved debris and bulk items lining the walls which made previous exterminations ineffective. They then performed the extermination clearing the house of all of the pests, then gave her a new mattress and zipped mattress cover.

When you are bugged by the bite of the District Government's bureaucracy and do not know where to turn, call my office. My staff and I will exterminate the problem of the government's business so you can get on with yours.

Phil

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Committee on the Judiciary

UPCOMING HEARINGS:

February 16, 2011 at 9:30AM in Room 123, Public Hearing on; **The Provision of Security Services by U.S. Security Associates for Municipal Buildings in the District of Columbia.**

February 16, 2011 at 2:30PM in Room 123, Joint Public Oversight Roundtable with the Committee on Government Operations & the Environment on; **Capital Projects & Assessment of Facility Needs for Public Safety Agencies.**

February 22, 2011 at 3:00PM in Room 412, Public Hearing on: **PR 19-23, Chief of the Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department of the District of Columbia Kenneth Ellerbe Confirmation Resolution of 2011.**

February 24, 2011 at 11:00AM in Room 120, Public Hearing on; **Continuing Overtime and Pay Problems in the Fire & Emergency Medical Service Department.**

*All hearings will be held at the John A. Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, unless otherwise noted.
To sign up to testify or for more information, contact the Committee at:
(202) 724-7808.*

***My Position on Newly Introduced
"Driver's License Legislation"***

Last month Councilmember Jim Graham and I introduced Bill 19-42, the "*Non-Driver's Identification Card/Driver's License Amendment Act of 2011.*" The bill is intended to remove the requirement that one must have a Social Security number in order to obtain a Driver's License. Almost immediately, there was criticism that the bill was intended to help illegal immigrants.

It is my view that immigration laws should be enforced by the federal government. But that is irrelevant regarding the bill. It is a fact that there are plenty of people in the United States who are here legally but do not have Social Security numbers. The intent of the bill is to enable them to drive.

By law, a Social Security number is required for citizens only if they work. According to the Social Security Administration: "Social Security numbers are used to report an individual's wages to the government and to determine a person's eligibility for Social Security benefits. You need a Social Security number to work, collect Social Security benefits, and receive some other government services." While it may seem strange to most of us, there are American citizens who do not work, and therefore do not have or need a Social Security number. They should not be prohibited from driving simply because they do not have a Social Security number.

Indeed, according to the Social Security Administration: "You do not need a number to get a Driver's License. We cannot assign you a Social Security number solely so you can get a Driver's License or a service that requires a credit check."

As for non-citizens, "you probably do not need a Social Security number." The Social Security Administration's Electronic Fact Sheet "*Social Security Numbers For Noncitizens*" goes on to state: "Lawfully admitted noncitizens can get many benefits and services without a Social Security number." All of this makes sense because Social Security is about retirement benefits for workers.

Thus, there are plenty of legal non-citizens and some US citizens who do not have a Social Security number. They should not be permitted to drive?

Driver's Licenses are not the way to enforce immigration laws. Think about it: if you are illegal you are simply not going to get a license. So it is an ineffective way to reduce the illegal population. But it does increase the number of unlicensed (and therefore uninsured) drivers on the road.

So the present law: (1) prevents legal people from getting a Drivers License; (2) does not reduce the illegal population; and (3) likely increases the number of uninsured motorists on the road.

I would rather that anyone who wants to drive to have a Drivers License. (Don't read that too broadly. Obviously there are some people, like children and drunks, who should be excluded. We're discussing competent adults.) The license serves several functions like collaterally requiring insurance and demonstrating basic skills via tests. Those purposes should not be lost amongst unrelated goals, especially when those goals are not being achieved.

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