

May 7, 2011



COUNCILMEMBER PHIL MENDELSON'S

# AT-LARGE UPDATE

## Redistricting the District

Last week the Council held two public hearings on the issue of redistricting. Although there was some testimony regarding Chevy Chase DC (divided between Wards 3 & 4 in the last redistricting) and Woodley Park (divided between Wards 1 & 3 for at least 30 years), almost all of the testimony concerned Wards 6, 7, and 8.

By law, the target population for the District's 8 Wards is 75,215 (601,723 divided by 8). As a result, three wards must change because the population in each deviates by more than 5% from the target population. This is the law. However, it is also fair that all wards be relatively equal in size. Ward 2 must change because it has too many residents, and Wards 7 and 8 must change because each has too few residents. All of the other Wards are within 2.6% of the target.

Residents of the Kingman Park and Rosedale neighborhoods are nearly unanimous that Ward 7 should not further expand west of the Anacostia River and Kingman Park should be "returned" to Ward 6. To add it to Ward 6, however, would increase the problem of Ward 7 being under-populated. Another alternative, expanding Ward 8 to include parts of Southwest or "Near Southeast" west of the Anacostia also received considerable attention at the hearings. Residents west of the river oppose the idea; many residents east of the river think it would improve the image of Ward 8.

The challenge is to find the best proposal that changes the populations of these three wards. It is impossible to do this without changing either Ward 5 or Ward 6 because Ward 2 does not abut either Wards 7 or 8. In other words, Wards 5 or 6 must change. Our options are limited. Generally speaking, they are: Fort Lincoln (Ward 5), Langston Terrace (Ward 5), Rosedale (Ward 6), Near Southeast/Navy Yard (Ward 6), or Southwest (Ward 6). So at last week's public hearings I asked witnesses; if not your neighborhood, then which other, and won't those residents be able to make the same arguments you are making?

The Redistricting Committee, of which I am a member, will meet within the next several weeks (probably not before May 16<sup>th</sup>) to adopt a proposal. Thereafter, there should be another public hearing so that residents may comment on a specific plan. The Council will vote sometime in June.

The Committee is considering all comments in order that it can recommend one specific option. I am confident that whatever option is adopted, many of the affected residents will be unhappy. Ultimately, the best option will be the most defensible – in terms of relative deviation from the target, adverse impact due to geographic barriers, compactness, and neighborhood cohesiveness.

I am available to meet with community groups to discuss redistricting now (before the committee adopts a plan) or later (before the Council votes). Additional information is available at the Greater Greater Washington website at [www.greatergreaterwashington.org](http://www.greatergreaterwashington.org) and search "redistricting." The Council's redistricting committee also has a website at [www.dccouncil.us/redistricting2011](http://www.dccouncil.us/redistricting2011).

## Constituent Services Corner

A Northwest woman emailed me frustrated with the Marriage Bureau at the District's Superior Court because she could not use the automated phone system to obtain a marriage license. Apparently, the automated message did not allow for same-sex couples to properly input their information because the only available choices were "Bride" and "Groom." There was no way for a Bride to select the other Bride's name to be placed on the marriage license or for a Groom to select another Groom. Her frustration was made worst because she could not contact anyone at DC Superior Court to ask them how to go about getting the license.

My office immediately contacted Marriage Bureau officials who said that same-sex couples could request marriage licenses through the automated system. My staff disagreed and asked to be conferenced into a call to the automated system so they could listen together. After listening, the court officials realized that the only selections available were "Bride" and "Groom." As a result, they are now taking steps to change the recording to include gender-neutral marriage selections.

When government isn't listening to you, call my office. We'll listen and get you the answers you need.

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### Committee on the Judiciary

#### UPCOMING HEARINGS:

May 19, 2011 at 10:00AM in Room 412,  
Public Hearing on;

- **Antifraud Fund Amendment Act**
- **Automated Traffic Enforcement Fund Amendment Act**

May 25, 2011 at 11:00AM in Room 412  
Public Hearing on;

- **Fine Proportionality Amendment Act**
- **Receipt of Stolen Property Amendment Act**

May 25, 2011 at 2:00PM in Room 412,  
Public Oversight Hearing on;

- **Continuing Overtime and Pay Problems in the Fire & EMS Dept.**

May 31<sup>st</sup> at 10:00AM in Room 412,

- **Uniform Foreign-Country Money Judgments Recognition Act**



*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.*

### Update: FY 2012 Police Budget

My April 15<sup>th</sup> Newsletter attempted to explain why the Police Department is projected to fall below 3700 sworn officers for the first time since 2004. The drop is a matter of concern to all Councilmembers. We now have a better understanding of the problem.

Police hiring has halted. The reason is an \$8 million "spending pressure" that results from faulty assumptions in this year's budget. The Council was not aware that these assumptions were faulty when it adopted the budget. The cost of salary fringe benefits was underestimated by over one percentage point; \$2.5 million in legally required "retention pay" for senior officers was forgotten; and federal reimbursement was overestimated. The halt in hiring offsets the deficit.

About 15 officers leave the Department every month – many retire, some take a job somewhere else. The attrition rate is 4.5%, low compared to benchmarks. Still, if there are 3,869 officers on the force today, by the end of the year 120 officers will have left. The FY 2012 budget (beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>) would hire only 30 new officers before January 1<sup>st</sup>. The size of the force will be 3,779.

To bring the Department up to 3,900 officers is estimated to cost \$14.5 million. This is daunting when one considers that the proposed budget is balanced and, therefore, to add \$14.5 million means to cut something else, or to increase taxes.

The Council's committees adopt their recommendations next week. These will be limited in scope. During the two weeks thereafter, Councilmembers will come together to discuss the budget as a whole. I will ask the Committee on the Judiciary to recommend bringing MPD back up to 3,900 officers, and I will lead the discussion in the full Council to find \$14.5 million. I think the goal is achievable, but difficult. We are scheduled to vote on the budget May 24<sup>th</sup>.

### 2009 DONATION OF FIRE TRUCK WAS IMPROPER

Almost two years to the day after Councilmembers Mendelson and Cheh requested the DC Inspector General to investigate, the IG has found that four administration officials acted improperly by attempting to donate a surplus fire truck and ambulance to the city of Sosua in the Dominican Republic. In addition to not following the proper procedures for disposing of surplus apparatus and donating government property, several of the officials acted improperly by accepting free transportation, meals, and gifts.

Former DC Attorney General Peter Nickles issued a report at the time concluding that the donation was "legal and totally proper," but the IG found that a principal author of the report – Chip Richardson who was then General Counsel to the Mayor – should have recused himself from the investigation. Mr. Richardson earlier had participated in attempting to effectuate the donation. He also had both a personal and previous professional relationship with Sinclair Skinner. Mr. Skinner is a private sector businessman who both arranged trips to Sosua and handled \$10,000 in cash from Sosua officials to transport the apparatus from Washington to the Dominican Republic.

The IG report vindicates criticism that the donation was improper. Unfortunately, the report has little utility two years after the incident. The two high-level political appointees implicated by the IG left the District government late last year.