
BOWSER Act

Background

The passage of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act of 1973 provided the District of Columbia government with the authority to pass local laws on “all rightful subjects of legislation within the District,” provided that the legislation is “consistent with the Constitution of the United States.” Under the Home Rule Act, residents of the District of Columbia elect a mayor and a 13-member council that governs our nation’s capital. Given the District’s poor track record on drugs, homicides, homelessness, riots, and crime broadly, it is time for Congress to reassert its constitutional responsibility to govern DC.

As an example of the DC Council’s failure to govern the District, they passed the Revised Criminal Code Act (RCCA) in 2022, which stripped away penalties for crimes. This happened at a time when DC was suffering from a spike in violent crime. The law made violent crimes like carjackings, robberies and even homicides eligible for reduced sentences, making DC a more dangerous place for residents and the millions of Americans that visit DC every year. Thankfully, Congress asserted its responsibility to govern DC by passing a Congressional Review Act resolution of disapproval that received widespread bipartisan support and was even signed into law by President Biden. If Congress had not acted swiftly, DC would be significantly more dangerous than it already is.

DC is our nation’s capital, home to the rich history of our country’s unique founding and the political center of our democratic republic. Instead of being a cesspool of crime and corruption, it ought to be a beacon of light to Americans and the world beyond. If residents and visitors cannot visit the capital in safety and petition their elected representatives, then the great American experiment will fail. Because it is the prerogative of Congress to govern DC, and because the DC Council refuses to consider the health and safety of the city, its residents, and visiting Americans, the Home Rule Act must be repealed.

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This bill repeals the District of Columbia Home Rule Act one year after passage of the bill.