

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS  
LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.R. 5494**



**TESTIMONY OF VALERIE SANTOS  
DEPUTY MAYOR, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 2010**

Good morning Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Valerie Santos and I am the District of Columbia's Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today about H.R. 5494, which would transfer ownership of six parcels of land from the federal government to the District of Columbia.

As you are aware, the District of Columbia has enjoyed a unique relationship with the federal government. One historical byproduct of that relationship is the existence of numerous, non-contiguous parcels of federally-owned land within the District's boundaries. While some parcels clearly retain national, regional or historic significance and warrant continued federal ownership, some do not. In fact, administrative jurisdiction over many of these parcels has already been transferred to the District, recognizing that these parcels can and should be used for local purposes when possible.

In recent years, the District has worked with the National Park Service and other federal agencies to identify certain parcels of federally-owned land within the District that are appropriate for transfer of ownership to the District. This has been a cooperative endeavor and one that is ongoing. H.R. 5494 represents another step forward in that process and seeks to transfer ownership of several parcels that have no apparent federal interest and which have important potential local uses that could be better facilitated through direct ownership by the District.

The need for timely transfers of unneeded or unused federal parcels has become more imperative as the District continues its own community and economic development efforts, particularly with respect to educational campuses in the District. Many of our educational campuses sit on separately owned pieces of land that are owned by the District and the federal government,

though jurisdiction rests solely with the District. This ownership patchwork often creates regulatory and administrative hurdles that limit the District's ability to utilize the land for the benefit of the District and its residents. One example is the Marie Reed Community Learning Center, which is included in H.R. 5494. This District facility -- which is a single building -- sits on a series of separately owned parcels, half on land owned by the District and half on land owned by the federal government. While the District has no plans for development on this site, the transfer of ownership will allow the District to better support efforts on the Learning Center's campus.

Of the remaining parcels of land included in H.R. 5494, two currently house unoccupied education facilities (Shaw Junior High School and Meyer Elementary School) and another houses the Southwest Library. A final parcel consists of a narrow piece of vacant property at the corner of North Capitol Street and Florida Avenue, NW. While there are no definitive plans for development on these particular parcels, conveyance of the properties will place ownership and decision-making authority with the appropriate local body should eventual action be desired.

Between July 2008 and July 2009 the District's population grew by an estimated 10,000 residents -- the largest one year gain since World War II. I believe the attraction of new residents and retention of those who have called Washington home for decades, is due to the District's innovative approach to creating new and vibrant neighborhoods and supporting those that already exist. H.R. 5494 will further these ongoing efforts by providing the continued flexibility - the same flexibility enjoyed by jurisdictions across the country - to utilize local property in a way that best serves the needs of local residents. Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.