



# chairman's update

the NEWSLETTER of  
DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson

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## BUDGET AUTONOMY VICTORY: WHAT IT MEANS & WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Nearly three years after voters first approved the Budget Autonomy Act, the District finally achieved resolution in the long-running legal battle over our ability to spend our own local revenues. In March, the Superior Court of the District of Columbia issued an opinion stating that the Council, the Mayor, and the District voters lawfully exercised their collective power to gain control over the expenditure of local funds. The ruling is an historic step in the District's quest for self-sufficiency.

This victory is of monumental importance to the District from a financial perspective. Congress has approved the city's budget ahead of the start of the fiscal year only three times since 1990. Previously, the Council was required to submit our budget "request," including a request to spend our local dollars, to Congress for inclusion in federal appropriations. This meant that spending our local revenue was tied to, and often delayed by, congressional approval of a budget.

The Budget Autonomy Act, which I introduced and moved through the Council in 2012, was overwhelmingly approved by District voters in a 2013 referendum. Despite this, it was necessary for the Council to initiate litigation to enforce the law. This litigation culminated in the victory we scored for the District last month.

Going forward, for the first time under Home Rule, the District's budget will be comprised of two bills pertaining to budget authority: one dedicated to federal funding to be transmitted to the President, and another dedicated to local funding that will be transmitted by the Council to Congress in the normal course followed by all District legislation (including two votes from the Council). No longer will the District require affirmative approval of its local budget from Congress.

This victory is also a major moral victory for the District. Local control over local revenues is another step toward broader autonomy, and our long quest for self-sufficiency.

## CONSTITUENT SERVICES CORNER

A Church Pastor reached out to our constituent services team on behalf of a Ward 8 senior experiencing major medical issues and a need for basic services. Facing an imminent release from a nursing facility, she had no where to go and was in need of help obtaining a housing voucher.

Our team jumped in to help the senior navigate through the application process. We helped her fill out the paperwork needed to acquire social security and identification cards, allowing her to apply for a housing voucher.

Working with the DC Housing Authority, our team was able to have the senior reinstated into the HUD voucher program.

She is now living in a wonderful one bedroom apartment in Ward 8.

When in need, let Chairman Mendelson's team help you feel at home.



ChairmanPhilMendelson



ChmnMendelson

Contact the  
Constituent Services Team  
at (202) 724-8158

# chairman's update

## EXAMINING THE MAYOR'S HOMELESS SHELTER PLAN

In February, the Mayor submitted to the Council her plan to close and replace the DC General emergency family shelter. The plan would create smaller, better-run shelter facilities in neighborhoods throughout the District. I support the concept behind the Mayor's plan because it prevents neighborhoods from combatting one another over the location of the shelters and allows for more effective service provision to families in crisis.

Though I think the approach is correct, the Council must explore the plan's cost, the sites selected, and whether the proposed plan will enable the District to continue to meet its legal obligation to shelter families experiencing homelessness in the future.

On March 17<sup>th</sup> I held a hearing on the proposed plan. Many residents expressed concern over issues such as seemingly exorbitant lease costs, a lack of transparency in how sites were selected, and zoning issues. As a result of the hearing we learned that over the life of each proposed lease, the District will pay tens of millions of dollars for land and improvements that will be turned over to developers at the conclusion of each lease. Furthermore, the process used to select each site remains unclear and does not seem to have considered all possible District-owned parcels. Also, advocates highlighted potential environmental issues with the proposed Ward 5 site. Finally, it is unclear that required zoning variances at each of the proposed sites can be secured in a timely manner.

The Council has requested additional information from the Mayor to explain the reasonableness of the proposed costs, site selection, and the structure of the proposed deals. While the Council is prepared to move ahead once we are able to determine that the proposed course is prudent, we must ensure that tax-payers' money is spent efficiently and effectively. Each dollar spent unwisely is a dollar that cannot be spent to end homelessness for a family or individual in the District. The Council is committed to moving to close DC General as soon as possible, however, we must be sure that we are doing the right thing in the right way.

[www.ChairmanMendelson.com](http://www.ChairmanMendelson.com)

## Upcoming Hearings of the Committee of the Whole

**FY17 Budget Hearing  
(UDC, DCHR, OLRCB, OEA,  
PERB)**

April 7, 2016  
9:30 a.m. in Room 412

**FY17 Budget Hearing  
(Exec. Agencies, CAB, OCP,  
OCTO)**

April 11, 2016  
10 a.m. in Room 412

**FY17 Budget Hearing  
(MWCOG, Council, ODCA,  
NCSC, OBP, OPEB & DCRB)**

April 14, 2016  
10 a.m. in Room 120

**Regular Meeting (Markup)**

April 19, 2016  
10 a.m. in Room 500

**Hearing on FY 2017 Budget  
BRA/BSA**

April 29, 2016  
10 a.m. in Room 500

**Additional Meeting (Markup)**

May 5, 2016  
4 p.m. in Room 500

To sign up to testify, or for more  
information, contact the  
Committee at (202) 724-8196