



chairman's update

the NEWSLETTER of
DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson

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INCREASED OVERSIGHT THROUGH THE METRO SAFETY COMMISSION

For commuters and those who reside in the District, SafeTrack has been the overwhelming topic of concern. One goal of SafeTrack is a safer, more reliable system.

In that regard, I have been very involved in pushing our Department of Transportation and our regional colleagues to be urgent in establishing an independent safety commission. Currently, the safety of our MetroRail system is overseen by a Tri-State Oversight Committee (TOC). For years, the TOC has been widely viewed as toothless.

Recent federal law requires public rail systems across the country to create a legally and financially independent state authority for safety oversight. The TOC is not compliant. The challenge for us is that to establish a new "state authority" involves three states: Maryland, Virginia, and the District. Under federal law, we must do so by 2019.

This is too long. When I learned last fall as chairman of the region's Transportation Planning Board that the state DOTs were working toward compliance by 2019, I demanded more urgent action. Subsequently, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx made the same demand – and threatened to withhold federal transportation dollars if a new Metro Safety Commission is not in place by February 2017.

I demanded that the three state DOTs invite legislative leaders from each jurisdiction to participate in the drafting. That took five months, but finally, in late May, I joined delegates and senators from Annapolis and Richmond, together with DOT representatives, to discuss drafting issues. We met again July 7th, and on July 12th a draft multi-state compact was introduced in the Council.

I continue to work with representatives from the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures to work out remaining issues with the draft compact. The issues include appointment process for the Safety Commission members, availability to the public of investigative reports, enforcement authority to ensure safety compliance by Metro, limitations on sovereign immunity, etc. I am very optimistic that the three states will work together successfully.

The Council will hold a hearing on the compact legislation (Bill 21-828) in September or early October, followed by a joint committee hearing in Annapolis sometime this fall. The Council should act this fall, and Maryland and Virginia should act next January, when their state legislatures are back in session.

Metro is integral to our region's success – and therefore the economic growth of the District. The new Metro Safety Commission will be a critical component of Metro's safety and dependability. It is imperative that riders have a reliable, convenient, and above all safe public transit system.

Constituent Services Corner

A constituent contacted Chairman Mendelson's office after trying to get a title transfer from the DMV, following the death of the owner of the car. Below are excerpts from her letters to our Constituent Services team before and after the issue was presented to them.

Dear Chairman Mendelson,
As I was gathering all my information for a case to take to the only DC Council Member with a record of making a difference these days, I was called by my brother who was working on [my deceased father's] estate along with my sister. I was informed that the title for my father's car had come up in probate. Per my family's request and leadership, I worked to transfer the car to my ownership, at my family's request. When I set out to accomplish what seemed a simple task, I never imagined it would take 6 additional trips and a mountain of challenges. Only to end up frustrated, overworked, bitter and broken from the ordeal.

I send you this letter and the documents related to the title, in hopes that you can help us resolve this situation justly.

I am truly appreciative and proud of the work that you did by including me in your busy schedule and not allowing the ball to get dropped. You are an example of excellence in Constituency Services, living up to your reputation and creating in return, an eager supporter for your councilmember.

Your work has already made not only a major difference in my life but some of the lives around me beyond your imagination.

Many Thanks & Blessings to you and your work

**Contact the Constituent Services
Team at (202) 724-8032**

chairman's update

THE EVER-CHANGING FACE OF THE COUNCIL

However one feels about incumbents, the advent of new colleagues is always an opportunity for fresh energy at the Council. As you know three members were defeated in the June 14th Democratic primary.

This is not the first time that Council has seen turnover of three or more members. Two years ago we had five new members (Allen, Nadeau, Silverman, May and Todd) and in 2007 we also had five new members (Alexander, Bowser, Cheh, Thomas and Wells), and in 1998 when I was first elected, I was one of three new members (Graham, Mendelson, and Orange).

Some speculate that this will make my work more difficult as Chairman, but I have always viewed my role as consensus-building and the challenge is no different. My duty is to build consensus among 13 individually elected leaders. Constituents want to see Councilmembers working well together. Indeed, they want to see the Council and Mayor working together. When there is a combined effort between us, Government works extremely well.

Increased Government Transparency Improves Integrity in Contracting

Procurement Reform legislation, which I authored, was approved this July by unanimous vote. The goal of the legislation, Bill 21-334, is to improve procurement rules based on experience. The bill has many provisions, all surrounding the goal of improving the integrity in the contracting process and increasing transparency. These provisions also ensure accountability for contractors in the procurement process and protecting subcontractors – who are often small, local, businesses.

The Bill requires that thorough information on executed contracts be posted on the Office of Contracting & Procurement's website. It prohibits contracting out inherently governmental functions. This policy limits contracts that essentially give third-party contractors the ability to make decisions on behalf of the government. This policy is copied from federal procurement rules, and protects the ability of government to maintain management control of District programs.

The legislation also requires that the District consider contractor past performance in making an award. The intent is to press contracting officers to dig deeper on a contractor's history, a factor that sometimes results in controversy if overlooked. We saw this with the healthcare contract for the jail, and, recently, the food service contract in the DC Public schools.

I am disappointed that a provision limiting campaign contributions was defeated. The proposal –which would have stopped companies that want to do business with the District from contributing to District political races or PACs -- was defeated by a 7-6 vote. This would have reduced the perception that companies contributing to District officials and candidates are given preferential treatment. This very simple 'pay-to-play' provision speaks to the need for us holding elective office, to be sensitive to how the public perceives the integrity of government.

Upcoming Hearings of the Committee of the Whole

*DC Council
Summer Recess
(July 15 – September 15)*

**Regular Committee of
the Whole Meeting**
September 20, 2016
10 a.m. in Room 500

Additional Legislative Meeting
September 20, 2016
11 a.m. in Room 500

Regular Legislative Meeting
October 11, 2016
11 a.m. in Room 500

**Regular Committee of
the Whole Meeting**
October 18, 2016
10 a.m. in Room 500

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

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