



# U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

*PRESS RELEASE*

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Contacts: Jenny Manley (Appropriations) (202) 224-6404

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Brian Hart (Sen. Brownback) (202) 224-0327

## **Appropriations Committee Approves FY 2007 District of Columbia Appropriations Bill**

WASHINGTON, DC – The Senate Appropriations Committee today gave approval to the fiscal year 2007 District of Columbia spending bill. The bill totals \$597 million in federal funds, which is \$200,000 below the fiscal year 2006 enacted level and the same as the President's budget request.

### **Highlights of the Bill:**

- **\$206.6 million for the DC Courts**, a decrease of \$4.8 million below the FY 2006 enacted level. Most of the funding will pay for renovations, improvements, and expansions of court facilities.
- **\$183.6 million for the DC Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency**, an increase of \$13.8 million above the FY 2006 enacted level. The majority of the increase will be used to increase the capacity for residential substance abuse treatment for offenders and to increase the availability of transitional living for returning offenders.
- **\$4 million for Marriage Development Accounts and Marriage Promotion**. MDAs are now available to low-income married and engaged couples who are citizens or legal residents of the District of Columbia and who have very low net worth. MDAs help couples save money to pay for job training or education, buy a home or start their own business. Participating couples have a high incentive to save because their contributions are matched at a ratio of 3:1 by the federal government and partnering private institutions. As a requirement of participation, couples will receive training that helps them repair their credit, set a budget and savings schedule, and manage their money. The Committee is pleased that the Mayor has also agreed to eliminate marriage penalties for the first two years of a couples' marriage.
- **\$33.2 million for DC resident tuition support**, which allows DC residents to pay in-state tuition rates at any public university. This is the same as the FY 2006 enacted level.
- **\$4.5 million for a new bioterrorism and forensics lab**. The District has a severe lack of lab capacity and limited technology and is therefore forced to rely on the assistance of the FBI's crime lab. Currently, the FBI limits the evidence it will process for the District. The lack of capacity has led to many cold crime cases in the District.
- **\$8.5 million for emergency planning and security costs** for events that occur in the District due to the fact that the District is the seat of the Federal Government. This \$4.8 million below the FY 2006 level, but reflects the rate at which the District is spending these funds.
- **\$40 million to promote inner-city educational opportunities in the District**. The initiative is comprised of 3 interrelated components: investing in excellence in traditional public schools; expanding choice through high quality charter schools; and offering opportunity scholarships for low-income students. Each component is allocated an equal amount of \$13 million, with the remainder available for administrative expenses at the Department of Education.
- **\$7 million for the Water and Sewer Authority to implement the Combined Sewer Overflow System**. Each year the antiquated system overflows 60-70 times, dumping raw sewage into the Anacostia River. This is the same as the FY'06 enacted level. The President requested no funds for this purpose. Since FY 2002, the Committee has provided almost \$95 million for this purpose.
- **\$15 million for a new Central Library in the District of Columbia**. The President requested \$30 million for a new central library, noting the need for a state-of-the art facility which would provide citizens access to modern technology and improved research and meetings facilities. The Committee believes that a better library system will help the District lower its adult illiteracy rate of 37 percent and help improve lives and opportunities of DC residents.

The proposed bill retains the Senate position on the following general provisions, which modify current law in two areas:

- Lobbying: prohibits federal funds, but allows local funds for all lobbying purposes, including lobbying for voting representation and statehood.
- Needle exchange: prohibits federal funds, but allows local funds to support any program which distributes hypodermic needles for the purposes of reducing disease transmission.

The bill maintains current law on the following other general provisions:

- Attorneys' fees: caps the amount paid to attorneys at \$4,000 per case in suits against the District of Columbia Public Schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Abortion services: Prohibits federal and local funds for abortion services, except in the case of rape or incest or to preserve the mother's health.
- Medical Marijuana: Prohibits federal and local funds to implement a 1998 D.C. initiative in support of the medical use of marijuana.

The bill includes language to allow students who are currently using scholarships in the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program to remain in the program as long as their families' income is below 300% of the federal poverty level. This is an increase from the current limit of 200% of federal poverty level. The Committee is making this change because it is concerned that nearly 10% of children will have to leave the program and that this loss will compromise the mandated federal evaluation of the program.

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