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DEMISE OF THE D.C. AMENDMENT

A proposed constitutional amendment died this August, and good riddance. It was a lemon when it came out of Congress seven years ago, and it didn't improve with age. Only 16 states ratified it; 34 states did not.

Our U.S. Constitution can be changed only with the approval of two-thirds of Congress and three-fourths of the states within a seven-year period. That difficulty has saved us from many a folly.

The text of the lately-deceased constitutional amendment, sometimes known as the "D.C. Rep" and sometimes as the "Washington, D.C." Amendment, provided that Washington, D.C. "shall be treated as though it were a state." That would give our capital city as much status in our government as each of the 50 states.

Each of our 50 states is represented in the U.S. Congress by two Senators and at least one Representative. The D.C. Rep Amendment would have added two Senators and at least one Representative whose unique constituency would be the Federal bureaucracy.

The real issue involved in the proposed D.C. Rep Amendment was the giving of special privileges and power to Federal bureaucrats. They would surely elect Senators and Representatives who would vote for the interests of their constituents, namely, higher taxes on the rest of the country to pay for the continued expansion of the Federal bureaucracy and its payroll.

The Federal Government employs more than a third of those working in Washington, D.C., and related service industries employ another 25%. Washington, D.C. can really be considered a "company town."

Senators from the 50 states must represent the interests of all the citizens in their states -- urban and rural, business and labor, and all social and economic classes. In Washington, D.C., however, there are no significant competing interests which its Senators would have to respect.

Washington, D.C., already has 100 Senators and 435 Representatives who live in or

near Washington and who are constantly voting special benefits for Washington, D.C. which no other state receives. The D.C. Rep Amendment would have given the Federal employees their very own "inside" lobbyists to make it easier and speedier to pass big-spending bills in Congress.

Congressional passage of the D.C. Rep Amendment on August 22, 1978 proved the effectiveness of having your own lobbyist inside Congress. That was the supreme achievement of Washington, D.C.'s first non-voting delegate in Congress, Walter E. Fauntroy, who diligently worked for this goal for eight years.

Like many pieces of special-interest legislation, the bleeding-heart liberals concocted bogus emotional issues to get their amendment through Congress. They didn't call the D.C. Rep Amendment a plan to give privileged treatment to federal payrollers; they said it was to help the victims of "taxation without representation."

It is not true that Washington, D.C. residents suffer taxation without representation. In 1961 the 23rd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gave the residents of Washington, D.C. three electoral votes in all elections for President and Vice President.

Washington, D.C. residents can elect their mayor, city council, and school board. They can also elect a delegate to the Congress who, although he cannot vote in the House, does participate in House floor debates and does vote on House committees.

The other bogus emotional issue was race. Even the Washington Post admitted that the D.C. Rep Amendment passed Congress because "part of the strategy of supporters was to put pressure on Senators who have large numbers of blacks in their states."

Our Founding Fathers' decision to locate our nation's capital in a District geographically separate from every state was made at a time when few blacks lived in the area and their right to vote was not an issue. Article I, Section 8, of the U.S. Constitution exempts the seat of our government from the political process so that the Federal Government can remain the servant of the people and not become its master.

The land in Washington, D.C., was ceded to our government by Maryland. If Washington residents want to vote for Senators and Representatives, they can simply ask to have the residential portions of Washington, D.C., ceded back to Maryland, while the Federal Government remains, as the Constitution says, under the authority of Congress.