

OPENING STATEMENT
The Honorable José Serrano
Chairman, Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations

Hearing on the District of Columbia
Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request
April 21, 2010

The subcommittee will come to order. Good morning to all of you. Today the subcommittee will hear testimony on the fiscal year 2011 budget request for the District of Columbia. I would like to welcome back Mayor Adrian Fenty, Council Chairman Vincent Gray, and the District's Chief Financial Officer, Dr. Natwar Gandhi. I am honored to have the opportunity to work with all of you and the D.C. government and I truly appreciate all of your commitment to ensuring that Washington, D.C. is a world-class city, worthy of its status as our Nation's Capital.

As I have said before, I have a special affection for the people of the District. As someone who was born in the American colony of Puerto Rico, I identify with the District's situation. The citizens of DC have been subject to the whims of Congress for too long. Too often they have watched helplessly as Congress imposed measures on them that would be imposed on no other city in the nation. Frequently the vehicle for these measures was the bill that this subcommittee authors. Since I became Chairman, however, one of my highest priorities has been to reduce the prohibitions and restrictions imposed by our bill on the operations of the District of Columbia and to give DC more autonomy in managing its fiscal affairs, particularly in deciding how local funds are spent.

We have removed numerous restrictions and untied DC's hands on a variety of issues. I believe that we have reached a fairly stable bi-partisan consensus that the people of D.C. should not have Congress interfering in their local affairs.

A good portion of the credit for this new consensus on DC's status is due to the recent leadership of the City government. From an outsider's perspective, it is clear that the City is being managed well, and is headed in a positive direction. For that we applaud the three of you, as representatives of that leadership. Together we have made significant progress in the past several years on ensuring District matters are left to the District and I look forward to working with you to continue to increase the city's legislative and budget autonomy.

Turning to the District's budget request, I am aware that the fiscal year 2011 request is currently under review by the city council and will not be transmitted to Congress until June. The request, as presented to the Council, totals \$10.4 billion, including \$5.3 billion in local-source general funds, a \$306 million increase over FY 2010.

For fiscal year 2011, the President's budget recommends Federal payments to the District totaling \$168 million, a net *decrease* of \$17 million.

The request includes \$7 million for two new initiatives, including \$5 million to support an HIV/AIDS initiative, and \$2 million designated for redevelopment in connection with St. Elizabeth's East Campus. I look forward to hearing more about these initiatives in your testimony.

The request also includes \$63 million to improve the District's public and charter schools, and \$9 million for the school voucher program to support the children currently in the program. Let me be clear on the issue of school vouchers—I continue to support the President's approach to this issue, which pays for the children currently in the program until their graduation. This seems a reasonable approach to me, and I will continue to support it.

In closing, I would like to thank the Mayor, Chairman Gray and the Council, as well as Dr. Gandhi in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer for their leadership in producing a fiscally responsible budget for FY 2011. We thank you for your diligent and continuous attention to the fiscal health of the District. I look forward to working with each of you as we move through the fiscal year 2011 budget process.

With that, I would like to recognize the subcommittee's Ranking Member, Mrs. Emerson, for any opening statement she wishes to make.