

For Immediate Release

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Give the Power Back to the People Grassroots Campaign

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## **Demand for Citizens' Initiative on the Definition of Marriage in D.C. Grows Grassroots Leadership Wants Ballot Measure in General Election 2010—Pushes People's Resolution**

### **Give the Power Back to the People**

*Washington, DC*— District of Columbia voters are upset about being pushed to the sidelines on the issue of defining or re-defining marriage in the nation's capital and are determined to have their say at the ballot box in 2010. They are signing on to the *People's Resolution* with its message, "Give the Power Back to the People". They are calling for a citizens' initiative on the Definition of Marriage in the 2010 General Election and are meeting and organizing to make that happen.

Throughout the United States, efforts to define or redefine marriage to include same-sex marriage have led to heated debates and legal challenges. Other jurisdictions have relied on referenda or initiatives to enable the voters to weigh in on the issue. Washington, D.C. is no different. D.C. citizens are moving aggressively to garner support and overcome any obstacles to ensure that a citizens' initiative is placed on the ballot in the General Election in 2010.

Leadership at the grassroots level is flexing its muscle. With Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners (ANCs) and community leaders in the forefront, people are uniting to get an initiative on the ballot. They are meeting in each ward to organize and to sign on to the *People's Resolution* (attached). It is anticipated that the D.C. Council will push for same-sex marriage by introducing legislation in the fall. Many D.C. voters are adamant that they will be the ones to decide whether there is a change in the definition of marriage and refuse to leave the issue to public officials (elected or appointed) or the courts.

Bob King, a Ward 5 ANC Commissioner with over 20 years of dedicated service, along with many other Commissioners and civic leaders is helping to facilitate discussion and action steps to moving a citizens' initiative forward in 2010. He is organizing meetings in each ward with much success, garnering ANC support for the *People's Resolution*. King can't imagine anyone being against citizen participation by way of an initiative. He believes that this is a way for elected officials to atone for their vote earlier this year recognizing same-sex marriages from other jurisdictions without first seeking the advice and consent of the people. According to King, "the issue of same-sex marriage is one of the most contentious issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the people must be heard." King says the idea of giving the *Power Back to the People* is "broader than just the issue of same-sex marriage," and has also been seen in the District budget and healthcare debate.

In a recent *Washington Post* article entitled "Lockout in the District," the D.C. council was criticized for "shut[ting] the public out" of its budget deliberations although all the "big decisions were being made behind...closed doors." This should not be the case in the seat of democracy called the District.

A vote on the measure could go either way, but a vote that residents are determined to have. In a city that decries the lack of voting rights and statehood, surely the vote of residents on an issue as important as

marriage cannot be ignored. Public hearings will not be enough to give people a true voice on this matter; only an opportunity to go to the neighborhood polls on Election Day and weigh in on the issue will suffice. Voters expect to be governed, but with their advice and consent.

Citizens of Washington, D.C. call upon the Mayor, the City Council, Delegate to Congress, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners as well as the D.C. Democratic State Committee, D.C. Young Democrats, D.C. Republican Party, and D.C. Statehood-Green Party, and the House of Representatives and Senate to stand with the citizens of the District of Columbia who demand a vote on the definition of marriage in the nation's capital. Community leaders also call upon civic groups, PTAs, political organizations, sororities, fraternities, and the faith community to support efforts to get a citizens' initiative on the ballot in 2010 on the issue of marriage. No one has to state a position for or against changes to the definition of marriage, but it must be clear that there is a great desire to allow D.C. voters to vote on the matter.

There are more than a half million residents in the District of Columbia who pay billions of dollars in federal taxes. As of June 30, 2009, there are 311,528 Democrats; 28,448 Republicans; 4,126 Statehood-Green Party and 66,078 Independents/No-Party registered voters. There are 411,476 total registered voters. Surely these voters deserve to vote on the definition of marriage, which is a core, important institution in our society.

<b>D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics Voter Registration Statistics</b>					
<b>As of June 30, 2009</b>					
<i><a href="http://dcboee.org/pdf_files/Statistics_Report_June_2009.pdf">http://dcboee.org/pdf_files/Statistics_Report_June_2009.pdf</a></i>					
<b><i>Democrats</i></b>	<b><i>Republicans</i></b>	<b><i>Statehood-Green</i></b>	<b><i>Independents/No-Party</i></b>	<b><i>Other</i></b>	<b><i>Total</i></b>
311,528	28,448	4,126	66,078	1,296	411,476
75.7%	6.9%	1.0%	16.1%	0.3%	100%

For further information or to request a resolution (to sign, support, and return), send an email to [grassrootsdc@gmail.com](mailto:grassrootsdc@gmail.com). Let's make a citizens' initiative on the definition of marriage a reality for the ballot in 2010.