



news release

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PRESIDENT JOHNSON ASKS CONGRESS TO MAKE WASHINGTON "FIRST CITY" IN THE NATION

WASHINGTON, D. C. (SPECIAL) -- President Johnson in a sweeping message to Congress Wednesday asked Congress to act on a broad range of new proposals which would make Washington the model American city and provide home rule for its citizens.

The President gave his full support to Mayor Walter Washington and the new city government when he said "A Mayor is in City Hall, in touch with the people, his leadership infusing confidence. A City Council is in action, providing meaningful representation for the citizens of the community. These are the breakthroughs and now we must consider the followthroughs."

The President continued: "That is the concern of this message. It presents my proposals to:

"Revive the hopes of the people with jobs for those who need them, education for the children who must prepare for the future, decent homes for the families so long without them.

"Reinforce the new strength of municipal government through further reorganization, and long-over-due salary increases for the public servants of the Nation's Federal City."

"In touching upon the crime problem, President Johnson said: "As we know, crime feeds on society's oldest imperfections--poverty, ignorance, blocked opportunities, the lack of a job and the dimming of hope. In the District as in the Nation these are the urgent matters on our agenda for action. But the clear fact remains that progress can only be achieved in a climate of public order."

"On the question of Home Rule, the President made his position crystal clear. He said:

"The citizens of the District have too long been denied a basic American right of representative government.

"They have been denied a community voice where in a democracy that voice counts most--in the halls of the Congress.

"The needs of the District cannot be adequately represented in the Congress by proxy, any more than could the needs of one of the 50 States.

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"I again endorse legislation to give the citizens of the District representation in Congress. I urge early action by the Congress on the proposals which it has under active consideration."

"The oldest pledge of this Nation is self-government for the people. That pledge remains unfilled for the 800,000 citizens of America's first city-- 160 years after James Madison wrote in the Federalist Papers that the citizens of the city which served as the Nation's Capital would have: "A voice in the election of the government which is to exercise authority over them."

"Last year's reorganization has rekindled the promise of democracy in Washington. But the promise of democracy can never substitute for democracy itself."

"I endorse home rule for the citizens of the Nation's Capital. For the 37 years I have been a resident of this city I have looked to the day when the promise of home rule would be realized and the District of Columbia could enter into full membership in the American Union. As long as I am President I will work to hasten that day's arrival."

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