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Hearing on Ethics Reform in the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Operations
DC Council

Chairwoman Bowser, Members of the Council, my name is Bob Kabel. For the past seven years I have served as Chairman of the District of Columbia Republican Party. I have lived in our city for more than thirty five years and have been a Kalorama resident for the past decade. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to testify about the pressing need for comprehensive ethics reform including effective enforcement mechanisms.

As a District resident I am saddened by the ethical issues that have been revealed over the past several months and even more so by the lack of action by Council to address them. As Chairman of the District of Columbia Republican Party I want to work with you to develop strong new ethics rules along with effective mechanisms for making certain that ethical violations are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Our city's reputation has once again been tarnished badly by the multitude of ethical violations that have been revealed. The lack of high ethical standards and the prompt investigation and resolution of alleged violations make the Mayor and DC Council the subject of ridicule both here and across our nation. The time for action is now.

Ethics reform enacted by this Council should be comprehensive in its scope, covering the Mayor and his Administration, DC Council and all those who come before. Attached to my written testimony, I have outlined several suggested action steps to make our city Government more ethical, restore public trust and prevent further embarrassment. I urge the Council to consider these ideas and move quickly to adopt a comprehensive package. At the core of ethics reform, is the need for two major improvements: first, reduce the influence of money in politics and, second, establish strong enforcement mechanisms so infractions are addressed quickly and with meaningful punishment.

Doing nothing is not an option. Opting for the status quo will result in the continuation of the stagnation our city is experiencing with the raft of ethical violations hovering over the Mayor and DC Council. If there ever was a time to do the right thing, to put principle above politics and reelection concerns, now is that time.

Chairwoman Bowser, the ethical nightmare that envelopes the Council and the Mayor presents an opportunity for real leadership on your part and that of your colleagues on this Committee and on the Council. Again, I urge you to develop comprehensive ethics reform legislation that

addresses real issues facing the Council, the Mayor and every Department and Agency of DC government. Nothing short of that will suffice. The citizens of the District of Columbia are watching and will accept nothing short of meaningful legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Ideas for Ethics Reform

DC Board of Elections and Ethics

1. Nominate and confirm and always have a Republican the DC Board of Elections and Ethics.
2. On a scheduled, regular basis, have the DCBOEE mail registered voters to verify contact information to ensure voter registrations are up to date.

Office of Campaign Finance

3. Prohibit "pay-to-play." Pay-to-play is the practice of government contracts and favors being awarded to individuals or entities in return for campaign contributions. Individuals and entities that give politician contributions should be prohibited from bidding for contracts and being appointed to positions. Their spouses, relatives and employees should also be prohibited from being appointed to positions.
4. Prohibit "wheeling." Wheeling is the practice of circumventing campaign contribution limit laws. Wheeling often is done when individuals or entities make contributions, their various businesses make contributions, relatives, friends and employees make contributions to circumvent campaign finance laws.
5. Mandate that elected officials complete their annual Financial Disclosure Forms with the Office of Campaign Finance. Currently, almost no elected officials complete their Financial Disclosure Forms that are intended to reveal potential conflicts of interest.
6. Eliminate the practice of accepting money orders and cash contributions for candidates and parties.
7. All political organizations that exist, no matter the purpose, must be registered and report to the OCF.

Constituent Services Funds (CSF)

8. Eliminate Constituent Service Funds or restrict their permitted purpose to a clear list of actual constituent programs.

District Buildings

9. Prohibit political and/or campaign related activities and/or meetings in any of the District buildings.

General Ethics

10. Suspend the vote, staff budget and office space/budget of any elected official who has been indicted by the US Attorney.
11. Suspend the vote, staff budget and office space/budget of any elected official who does not pay his/her DC taxes while in office.
12. Prohibit private legal counsels and/or lobbyists that represent elected officials from also representing business before the DC Government.
13. The District Government shall respond to FOIA requests within 24-48 hours with a confirmation and an estimated date for completion.
14. Elimination of "free" luxury suites and/or tickets.
15. Prohibit District Government staff from participating in election and/or campaign related activity.
16. Elimination of taxpayer funded vehicles for Councilmembers and their staff. The Mayor shall only have 1 taxpayer funded vehicle and his/her staff shall have none.
17. Prohibit personal email accounts for any Council and/or Executive business (not subject to FOIA) and have elected officials certify that if they have a personal email account, disclose the email address and certify annually under penalty of perjury that it has not been used to communicate any pending or anticipated official business.
18. Prohibit Council and/or Executive employees to work for outside firms that hold contracts with the city government during their time in office and after 3 years from leaving office.

Nepotism

19. Prohibit relatives of appointed public officials from being also appointed by District Government.

Procurement

20. If previously employed by District Government, mandate a no-contract clause that prohibits former senior employees from contracting with District Government for 3 years.
21. Place all procurements online for public viewing.
22. Prohibit ear marks.
23. Prohibit Council and/or Executive interference in the procurement process.
24. Prohibit Council and/or Executive to award contracts to firms at which their spouses or relatives are employed.

Clean Elections

25. Early votes, absentee and provision ballots collected early shall be accessible to view by a representative from each campaign.
26. Election Day workers approved by the DCBOEE cannot be involved with a campaign and cannot contribute to a campaign.
27. The counting of Election Day ballots must have a representative from each campaign monitoring the vote count. The public should be allowed to view the counting with public access video.

Motor Vehicle

28. Require DC Councilmembers to pay for their parking spaces outside the Wilson Building.
29. Require DC Councilmembers, their spouses, friends and staff to pay for motor vehicle tickets.
30. Prohibit the Council and Mayor from issuing low license plate numbers to friends and supporters. Low license plate numbers should be auctioned off to generate revenue for the General Fund.

Lobbyists

31. Prohibit lobbyists from serving on various boards and commissions.
32. Prohibit lobbyists from serving the Council and/or Executive in any other way at a discounted rate.
33. Prohibit gifts exceeding \$25 from lobbyists to Council and/Executive and its staff. This should include trips, dining, tickets, gifts and benefits.

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