



August 14, 2025

Dear Representatives and Senators:

On behalf of Campaign Legal Center (CLC), we write to express grave concern over President Trump's recent interventions in the District of Columbia. As a nonpartisan organization that works to advance American democracy, CLC strongly opposes President Trump's efforts to unjustifiably federalize D.C.'s local law enforcement and deploy the National Guard into the District. These unprecedented actions are a troubling misuse of executive power, as well as a direct affront to our country's core democratic principles. Accordingly, we urge Congress to end this presidential overreach.

This episode is not about increased law enforcement—it is a democratic failure that highlights the urgent need for D.C. statehood. Importantly, the president's actions in D.C. are only possible because of a longstanding injustice in our democracy: the disenfranchisement of over 700,000 Americans living in our nation's capital who lack true representation in Congress and control over their own governance.

In his executive order seizing control of the Metropolitan Police Department,ⁱ President Trump invoked Section 740 of the Home Rule Act, the statute that grants D.C. its limited autonomy.ⁱⁱ This provision allows the president to declare that “special conditions of an emergency nature exist which require the use of the Metropolitan Police force for federal purposes” and to direct the mayor of D.C. to provide “such services of the Metropolitan Police force as the President may deem necessary and appropriate” to address the situation.ⁱⁱⁱ

However, while Section 740 enables the president to declare the emergency and take some initial acts, Congress maintains the broader authority to terminate it. Indeed, Section 740 only permits the president to exercise this authority for up to 48 hours without formally notifying Congress, and any use of D.C.'s police force for federal purposes can only last 30 days unless an act of Congress authorizes an extension. Congress also has the power to end the president's intervention at any earlier date.^{iv}

President Trump's seizure of D.C.'s law enforcement is unprecedented. In fact, Section 740 of the Home Rule Act has never been invoked in the more than 50 years since its enactment,^v even as our nation and the city have faced a plethora of challenges. President Trump's assertion that “special conditions of an emergency” justify the takeover of D.C.'s police force was a pretext for this administration to push the boundaries of presidential power and exert direct control over the District's residents. It is an opportunity that would simply not be available if D.C.'s residents had the sovereign statehood they deserve.

President Trump also utilized his status as commander-in-chief to deploy D.C.'s National Guard into the District.^{vi} This is not only a highly dubious use of the military for civilian policing, but also reflective of another power the president could only claim because of D.C.'s limited autonomy. Each state's governor typically has primary control over their jurisdiction's National Guard. However, D.C. does not have a governor, and the Home Rule Act does not grant the mayor equivalent authority.^{vii} As a result, President Trump was able to unilaterally deploy D.C.'s National Guard without approval from local government officials the District's voters directly elected.

By bypassing D.C.'s democratically chosen leadership and deploying federal forces without the District's consent, President Trump's actions reflect executive overreach that undermines core principles of democracy and our Constitution, including the separation of powers, self-determination, and a government that is accountable to its people.

Congress must ensure that the autonomy of the District of Columbia's residents is never again violated, particularly with force of arms. To that end, we urge you to immediately oppose any further federal encroachment on D.C.'s local governance and vote to end the president's control of the District's police force. Following this, every lawmaker must support legislation that will finally grant D.C. statehood.

This solution is not only overdue, but absolutely necessary to give the residents of our nation's capital the same rights and protections afforded to their fellow Americans.

Sincerely,

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ⁱ The White House, *Declaring a Crime Emergency in the District of Columbia* (Aug. 11, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/08/declaring-a-crime-emergency-in-the-district-of-columbia>.

ⁱⁱ Council of the District of Columbia, *D.C. Home Rule*, <https://dccouncil.gov/dc-home-rule> (last visited Aug. 14, 2025).

ⁱⁱⁱ District of Columbia Home Rule Act, Pub. L. No. 93-198, § 740, 87 Stat. 774, 830 (1973).

^{iv} *Id.*

^v Lindsay Whitehurst, *Trump's moves toward taking over Washington are unprecedented. Here's what the law says*, Associated Press (Aug. 11, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-washington-crime-national-guard-police-13ba96454031352665e59ee67f678482>.

^{vi} The White House, *Restoring Law and Order in the District of Columbia* (Aug. 11, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/08/restoring-law-and-order-in-the-district-of-columbia>.

^{vii} Kyle Cheney and Josh Gerstein, *What Trump can — and can't — do in his bid to take over law enforcement in DC*, Politico (Aug. 11, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/11/dc-law-enforcement-national-guard-deployment-00502896>.