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GREATER WASHINGTON

www.dcvote.org

CFC #66340

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Mayor Vincent C. Gray
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 316
Washington, DC 20004

October 8, 2013

Dear Mayor Gray:

Thank you for advancing DC self-determination by refusing to allow the federal budget shutdown to suspend District government operations. We commend you and the DC Council for clearly reaffirming that our local tax dollars will not be held hostage by a dysfunctional Congress.

We look forward to 2014 when the budget autonomy law backed by our elected leaders and 83 percent of District voters, will assert the District's authority to spend local tax dollars.

The use of local contingency funds to avert a complete shutdown is a prudent action, but is also an approach that in a way validates an unjust budget arrangement with our federal managers. Indeed, even with use of contingency reserves, your administration has not been able to fully fund DC government operations and has had to make painful choices over which services to provide and which ones to deny. Most notably, the District has been forced to halt all Medicaid payments to providers, not because the District lacks resources but because the lack of federal approval of our budget prevents us from fully using our own tax resources. This puts the health care of hundreds of thousands of DC residents at risk.

We as a city have a duty to keep our local tax dollars flowing – and our local government working – both as a matter of simple justice and good policy. It is simply wrong to have Congress back us into a corner to deny critical services to DC residents when resources are available, only because the federal government has not given us permission to spend our own funds.

We know you will continue to stand with the people of DC – and send the proper signal to the Congress and the nation – but we ask you to expend local funds immediately in order to continue funding services and keep the government fully operating, even once the contingency funds are exhausted.

The injustice of Congress denying services to DC residents should compel you to set aside the unfair federal restrictions placed upon the District. Moreover, based on public statements by key members of Congress, and the lack of public push back from administration officials, it is clear the practical, real world risks posed by this action are substantially less than the theoretical risks outlined by several officials.

The District's shutdown strategy was forged from the resolve by our leaders to address injustice head on. Our organizations, and the thousands of District residents we represent, trust you will continue to challenge an unjust, illogical and archaic budget arrangement – both during the shutdown and as we move to implement our new budget autonomy law.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Perry, Executive Director, DC Vote
Ed Lazere, Executive Director, DC Fiscal Policy Institute
Joslyn Williams, Metropolitan Washington Council AFL-CIO
Nikki Lewis, Executive Director, DC Jobs With Justice

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