

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

Collection: Roberts, John G.: Files
Folder Title: D.C. (District of Columbia)
Nonpartisan Elections
Box: 17

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digital-library>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:

<https://reaganlibrary.gov/document-collection>

Contact a reference archivist at: reagan.library@nara.gov

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/citing>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 11, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR RICHARD A. HAUSER

FROM: JOHN G. ROBERTS *JGR*

SUBJECT: District of Columbia Nonpartisan Elections

Steve Rhodes has asked C.A. Howlett and you to consider his friend Willie Leftwich's proposal that elections in the District be held on a nonpartisan basis. Leftwich argues that this is the only way that Republicans would have a chance to be elected to any local government posts.

Leftwich is probably correct, but requiring that District elections be nonpartisan would require amendment of the District of Columbia Self-Government and Governmental Reorganization Act, Pub. L. 93-198, 87 Stat. 774 (1973) (the so-called "Home Rule Act"). With one exception, the Home Rule Act clearly contemplates partisan elections in the District. Pursuant to § 421(b) of the Act, "the Mayor... shall be elected on a partisan basis...." Section 401(a) provides that "the members of the Council shall be elected by the registered qualified electors of the District." Although elections for the Council are not explicitly established as partisan, as in the case of elections for Mayor, the Home Rule Act does provide that a political party may nominate a number of candidates for the at large Council seats equal to no more than one less than the number of at large vacancies, § 401(b) (2). This clearly indicates that the elections are to be partisan affairs, with a role for the political parties. See also § 401(d) (3) (no more than three of the four at large Council seats may be held by members of the same political party). The one exception to the partisan nature of District elections concerns the D.C. Board of Elections. Pursuant to § 495 of the Act, the eleven members of this Board are elected "on a nonpartisan basis."

I see no way of convincing either the D.C. Council or the Congress to go along with a plan to increase Republican chances in local District elections by making them nonpartisan. There certainly is no way given the current controversy over D.C. affairs engendered by the Chadha decision and our position on the D.C. Chadha bill. Leftwich's good idea has no chance of becoming anything more than a good idea.

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

April 30, 1984

MEMORANDUM TO: C.A. Howlett
FROM: J. Steven Rhodes
SUBJECT: Willie L. Leftwich

Willie Leftwich is probably one of the brightest and most sophisticated lawyers I have ever met. I am attaching a copy of a letter I recently received from him regarding the possibility of establishing non-partisan elections in the District of Columbia. Due to the fact that elections in the District are not held on a nonpartisan basis, the possibility of electing a Republican to office is almost nill.

Because you have the responsibility of the liaison to the District, I thought you should see the attached letter for the conversations you will probably be having with OMB and the General Counsel's office concerning the District of Columbia.

I will be happy to be of assistance to you in this effort in any manner you deem appropriate.

cc: Willie Leftwich
Richard Hauser ✓

1101 FIFTEENTH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20005

27 APR 1984

April 26, 1984

Mr. J. Steven Rhodes
Old Executive Office
Building
Room 285
Washington, D.C. 20501

Dear Steve:

At this point in time, neither Congress, the Federal Courts, nor the Executive Branch can or will change our local political and economic situation. We live in a city where vision and progress have to a large extent been supplanted by a midget political machine and a glaring lack of debate. The Federal Government may intervene, but the intervention will be "noisy", highly visible and largely ineffective.

One healthy way to invigorate our city is by reintroducing the two party system. This is not a task to be pursued with heavy hands, rather, nonpartisan elections could serve the purpose.

Our city government has been without honest debate and Republican input for more than ten (10) years. Nonpartisan elections would at a minimum permit some limited but upwardly mobile movement for our young people and a real opportunity to form alliances in some wards and on certain candidates and issues.

A viable two party system could be a boom to the citizens of the District and would quickly alleviate the "ignore them attitude" of our elected officials. Active party politics could influence the static opposition encountered in our home rule efforts. It will also foster an increased comfort index of Republican members of Congress and members of the Administration.

1101 FIFTEENTH STREET, N. W.
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20005

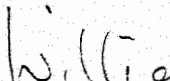
J. Steven Rhodes
April 26, 1984
Page 2.....

Finally, if we as Republicans are to ever develop a real political vehicle in this town we must do so with local candidates and issues. We cannot hope to maintain any semblance of political reality as Republicans by trying to graft our pre-1972 fund raising abilities on a Chief Executive -- who happens to reside in the White House and be a Republican. Our failure to correct this imbalance will only result in the local Party becoming more of a bother to Republican Administrations while becoming more of a joke locally.

An attempt at securing nonpartisan elections is timely, and one that the Democrats would not hesitate imposing if they were confronted with our plight.

Can the try but help our now fairly hopeless position?

Sincerely,


Willie L. Leftwich

WLL/psj