

*What's the ONLY DEMOCRACY
in the entire world where the residents
of the capital have NO VOTE in Congress?*



LC Education
CR Fund



DC Vote.



Of all the capitals in all the world's democracies,
only Washington, D.C. doesn't have
voting representation or real home rule.

*“Voting is the language of our
democracy. Without it, the citizens of
the District of Columbia are the silent
voice in the wilderness, spectators
to democracy, right in the shadow of
the very governing institutions
that serve as a shining beacon
to the rest of the world.”*

— Wade Henderson, President and CEO
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights



*“Continued denial of voting representation from the
District of Columbia can no longer be justified.”*

— Former Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court William H. Rehnquist
(as Assistant Attorney General, June 1970)

“Taxation without representation”

...It's Still a Fact of Life in Washington, D.C.

Most Americans take it for granted that they have representatives in Congress who speak out and stand up for their interests and values.

But residents of our nation's capital — Washington, D.C. — still don't have this basic democratic right. The District's only voice in Congress is a non-voting delegate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, who serves in the House of Representatives but is not permitted to vote on the floor of Congress.

Despite the federal taxes they pay, the wars they fight in, and the other obligations of citizenship that they perform, residents of Washington, D.C. simply do not have the basic American right of voting representation in Congress.

Why are the residents of our nation's capital denied voting representation in Congress and the same measure of home rule as other Americans? This denial of basic democratic rights began because, instead of being part of a state, Washington, D.C. was a federal district — the District of Columbia (the “D.C.” in Washington, D.C.). And, for the past half century or more, African Americans have made up a majority of the residents of Washington, D.C., which may have prompted some of the opposition to providing the nation's capital with voting representatives in the U.S. Congress.

A Shameful History:

Two Centuries of Disenfranchisement

For more than 200 years, the residents of our nation's capital have been denied voting representation in Congress.

Our nation's founders had a better idea. From the incorporation of Washington, D.C. in 1791 until 1801 when Congress passed the "Organic Acts" to govern the federal district, the capital's residents were represented in Congress by people they voted for in Maryland or Virginia.

But the "Organic Acts" took Congressional representation away from the residents of the District of Columbia. This was the only time in our nation's history that Congress passed a law that literally disfranchised a group of Americans.

Since 1801, there have been many efforts to restore D.C. residents' right to voting representation. While D.C. residents were granted the right to vote for president in 1961, the right to voting representation in Congress has remained out of reach. In 1978, Congress passed a constitutional amendment to give D.C. full voting representation, but it was not ratified by the states.

Thus, residents of the nation's capital have not had a vote on historic decisions by Congress, such as every war that the nation has fought, including the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. In fact, D.C. residents have not had a say on issues involving their own city, including the abolition of slavery in the nation's capital in 1862 and the establishment of the Home Rule Charter in 1973.



“Over more than two centuries, residents of the District of Columbia have fought in ten wars and paid billions of dollars in federal taxes. They have sacrificed and shed blood to help bring democratic freedoms to people in distant lands. But here, at the symbolic apex of democracy, they lack what is arguably the most fundamental right of all.”

— Representative Tom Davis, R. Va., 2006



*“Do not experiment in the District of Columbia,
experiment in your own states.”*

— Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, 2003.

Disenfranchising Washington, D.C. Flies in the Face of the Facts:

While Washington, D.C. does not have voting representation in the U.S. Congress, the nation's capital has a larger economy, pays more federal taxes, and has lost more servicemen and women in our nation's wars than many states that do have representation.

Here are the facts:

FACT: Washington, D.C. has approximately 600,000 residents — more than the approximately 500,000 residents of Wyoming.

FACT: Twenty states have lost fewer residents in our nation's wars than Washington, D.C.'s families have lost.

FACT: Washington, D.C. residents pay \$1.6 billion a year in federal taxes — more per person than the residents of every state.

FACT: Washington, D.C.'s economy is larger than the economies of 14 states.

FACT: Congress treats Washington, D.C. as a state for the purposes of 500 of the nation's laws.

Limited Self-government in our Democracy's Capital

Because Washington, D.C. is a federal district under Congress' authority, residents of our nation's capital enjoy less self-government than the people of any other major American city.

Under a limited form of "home rule," Congress can overturn all the laws passed by Washington's elected City Council, all the actions of its elected mayor, and even all the interpretations of its laws by D.C. judges. In most cities, the basic law establishing their municipal government is a city charter, which was written by the people's elected representatives. But in Washington, D.C. the charter was enacted by Congress and can't even be amended without Congress' approval. Similarly, Congress must approve Washington, D.C.'s annual budget, including spending of the residents' own local tax dollars.

Largely because Congress controls taxing and spending in Washington, D.C., the District suffers from a continuing financial crisis, contributing to high crime rates, deteriorating neighborhoods and schools, and other conditions that embarrass all Americans and make our nation's capital less attractive to visitors from this country and throughout the world.

On the revenue side, the federal government's operations within D.C. are exempt from property, corporate income and sales taxation. All in all, an eye-popping 42 percent of the land within Washington, D.C. — worth \$20.8 billion in all — is exempt from taxation. That's a larger share of the land than is tax-exempt in any other city or state in the entire country. Nor is D.C. allowed to tax the tens of thousands of workers who commute to the capital from nearby communities, making use of many of D.C.'s services

but not helping to pay for them. Meanwhile, on the spending side, the federal government's presence creates many expenses for which Congress doesn't reimburse the D.C. government.

That's why local tax rates in Washington, D.C. are much higher than the average for communities in this country. And, because D.C.'s budget is often in crisis, our nation's capital struggles with these problems:

- ▶ **HIGH CRIME RATES** and inadequate police protection;
- ▶ **AN AGING SEWER SYSTEM** that contributes to water pollution;
- ▶ **TEACHER LAYOFFS** and school buildings in need of repair and modernization;
- ▶ **HOSPITAL CLOSINGS**; and
- ▶ **SHUTDOWNS** of public libraries.

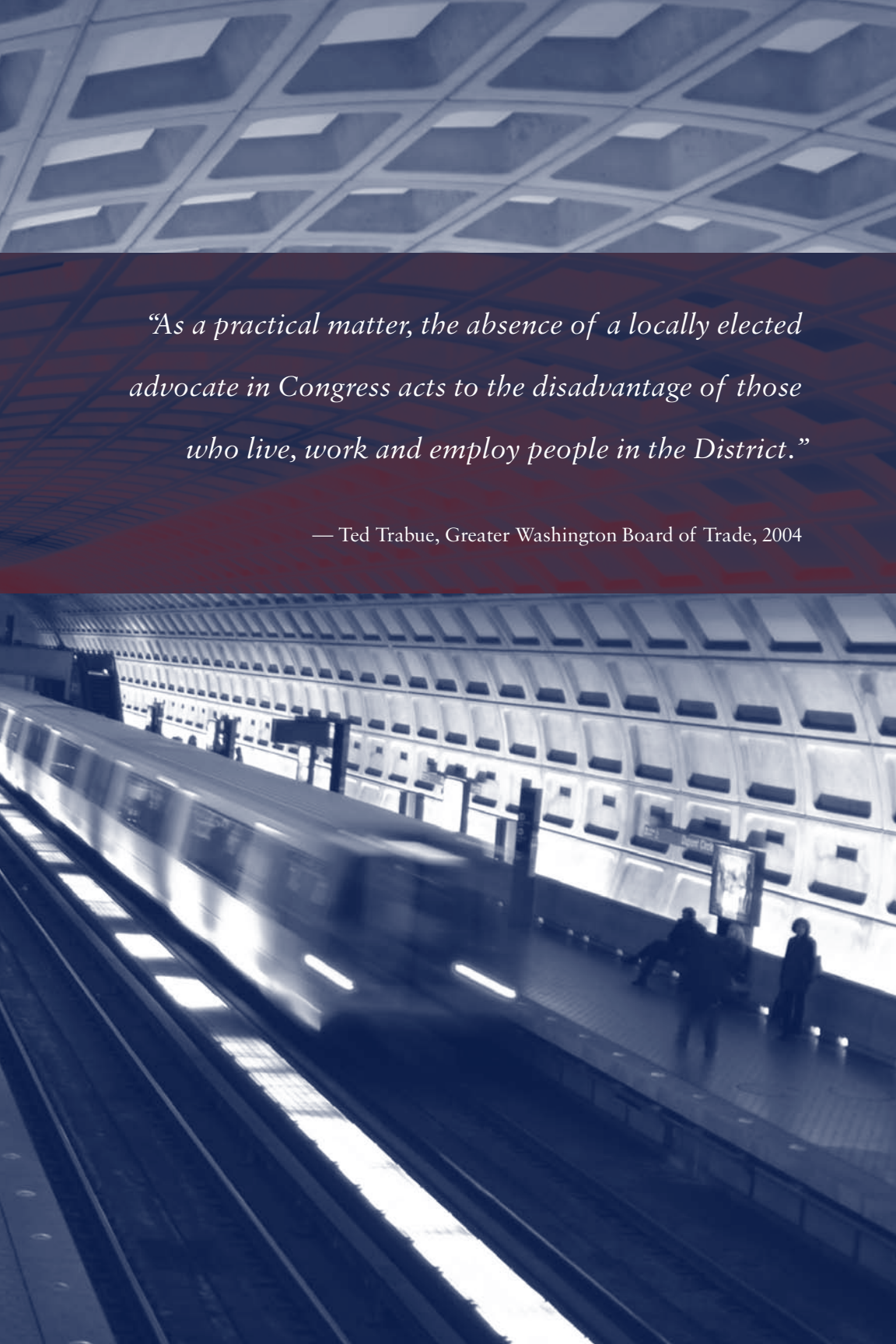
Micromanagement— Not Real Home Rule

Because of its broad jurisdiction over our nation's capital, Congress legislates on local matters large and small. Very often, Washington, D.C. becomes a laboratory for ill-considered experiments or the subject of symbolism that members of Congress would never impose on their own constituents.

Sometimes, Congress excludes D.C. from programs open to the states, such as a program for disadvantaged teens for which funds were approved for all the states but specifically crossed-out for our nation's capital. Sometimes, members of Congress score points on controversial issues at the expense of D.C. residents. For instance, Congress has prevented Washington, D.C., which has a high violent crime rate, from controlling gun sales. In another action, Congress has overturned a D.C. law covering contraceptive drugs under health insurance, even though 23 states have similar laws.

Meanwhile, some members of Congress try to test their own pet projects in the nation's capital. For instance, one member of Congress tried to impose the "flat tax" on D.C., under which wealthy people would have the same rate as middle class families, even though no Washington residents testified in favor of the idea. Other members of Congress have imposed private school vouchers on D.C., costing its public schools funds that they urgently need.

Our nation's founders said that taxation without representation is tyranny. Experimentation without representation is irresponsible.



“As a practical matter, the absence of a locally elected advocate in Congress acts to the disadvantage of those who live, work and employ people in the District.”

— Ted Trabue, Greater Washington Board of Trade, 2004



One is the Loneliest Number

How Voting Representation for D.C. Could Make a Difference for America

If Washington, D.C. had voting representation in Congress, its residents would have at least one U.S. Representative. In recent years, a voting member from D.C. could have changed the outcomes of important issues, from tax cuts for the rich to special deals for the big pharmaceutical companies, not only by casting his/her own votes but also by providing leadership and persuading other members of Congress to change theirs.

For instance, in 2003, the bill extending Medicare to cover prescription drugs passed the House by one vote. Many members of Congress, as well as the District's delegate, preferred another version of the bill, which would have allowed the government to negotiate with the drug companies to lower their prices — and one or two votes would have made the difference.

The Consequences of Disenfranchising Our Nation's Capital

from **A** to **Z**

Because the residents of our nation's capital don't have real home rule or voting representation in Congress, they have to live with policies made by representatives whom they didn't elect. Here's a sampling of decisions that D.C. residents had no voice in making and no way of changing:

ADVOCACY FOR D.C. RIGHTS — CONGRESS' GAG ORDER Most Americans can petition their government, but not residents of our nation's capital. In 2002, Congress prohibited Washington, D.C. from using its own local government funds to lobby Congress for voting representation.

BOND RATINGS — HIGHER INTEREST, HIGHER TAXES FOR D.C. Because Congress tends to delay final enactment of the D.C. budget beyond the start of the fiscal year each October, in some years D.C.'s bond rating has suffered. The result? Higher interest rates — and higher taxes — for D.C. residents.

CHILD SUPPORT CUTS — FAMILY VALUES, ANYONE? As part of the tax and program reductions that passed in 2005, Congress cut an effective child support program by \$1.5 billion nationally and \$2.2 million in D.C. This means that thousands of kids in our nation's capital will have to go without some of life's necessities. D.C. residents have no vote, and, therefore, no say in our nation's tax policy.

DEAF CHILDREN — A HALF CENTURY OF SEGREGATION An elementary school associated with Gallaudet University (and still open today), Kendall School for the Deaf opened in 1856, serving deaf children, both black and white. But in 1906, in one of hundreds of actions establishing racial segregation, Congress sent the school's black children to the Maryland School for the Colored Blind and Deaf in Baltimore. Kendall did not accept black students again until 1952.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS PUT CITIZENS AT RISK The Anacostia River is among the dirtiest in the nation. The sewage and storm overflow systems are significantly antiquated. Yet, with limited power in Congress and with the Environmental Protection Agency, the District has been unable to secure the support it needs to fix the sewage system and clean up the river. The result: a toxic river that abuts poor D.C. neighborhoods.

FIREARMS — CONGRESS TRIED TO INTERFERE WITH D.C. GUN SAFETY LAWS D.C.'s gun control laws are among the safest in the nation. They limit handguns and semi-automatic weapons, require registration of rifles and shotguns, and require firearms stored at home to be in non-operating condition. In 2004, at the urging of the National Rifle Association, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill repealing D.C.'s gun laws. But, fortunately, after being subjected to significant pressure from D.C. residents, the Senate didn't follow the House's lead.

GREENBELT, MD. — DISCRIMINATION IN A D.C. SUBURB In 1935, Congress authorized the founding of Greenbelt, Md., a planned community in the Washington, D.C. suburbs to provide housing and employment for low-income families. The town was developed under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 and was operated by the federal government until 1953. For many years, no African Americans were allowed to live in Greenbelt, while another federally-built town, Langston Terrace in northeast Washington, D.C., was entirely black.

HEALTH INSURANCE — STRAIGHT, MARRIED PEOPLE ONLY In 1992, the D.C. City Council passed the Health Care Benefits Expansion Act to allow domestic partners to register with the mayor's office, permit D.C. employees to buy health insurance for a registered partner at the employees' own expense, and require health care facilities to allow visitation rights for domestic partners, including gay and lesbian partners, unmarried straight couples, and platonic and familial relationships such as grandmothers raising grandchildren. But Congress prevented the new D.C. law from going into effect by prohibiting D.C. from spending any funds — federal or local — to implement it. After an intense lobbying campaign, this rule was relaxed in 2002, allowing D.C. to spend its own locally raised revenues on the program.

IMMIGRATION — GIVE ME YOUR TIRED, YOUR HUNGRY, YOUR DISENFRANCHISED Congress is considering comprehensive immigration reform that would affect the 7-11 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. today, including 15,000-30,000 in the District of Columbia. Citizens of Washington, D.C. must be represented in this important immigration debate, which affects federal policies aimed at rewarding hard work and providing sensible ways for immigrants to emerge from the shadows. D.C. residents have no vote, and, therefore, no say in our nation's immigration policy.

JUDGES IN D.C. — IMPOSED FROM OUTSIDE Because D.C. doesn't have real home rule, neither D.C. voters nor D.C. elected officials select the judges for D.C. courts. Instead, D.C.'s judges — including its trial court judges who hear purely local disputes under D.C. law only — are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

DR. KING'S DREAM — D.C. MARCHERS HAD NO REPRESENTATION On Aug. 28, 1963, thousands of D.C. residents participated in the historic civil rights march with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for a strong federal civil rights bill. They, too, had a dream. Yet they had no representative voting for their dream when Congress passed the landmark Civil Rights Act in 1964.

LAWSUITS IN FEDERAL COURTS — FOR 139 YEARS, NO DAY IN COURT FOR D.C.

RESIDENTS Between 1801 and 1940, D.C. residents were not allowed to sue citizens of other states in the federal courts. Since D.C. courts of general jurisdiction were federal courts, D.C. citizens were left few options if, for example, they wanted to satisfy a debt incurred in New York.

MEDICAID — SHOW ME YOUR PAPERS In 2005, Congress required recipients of Medicaid (the federal health insurance program for the poor) to prove their citizenship by submitting a birth certificate or passport. This will decrease Medicaid coverage among eligible American-born citizens, especially elderly African Americans, of whom about one in every five lack a birth certificate. D.C. residents have no vote, and, therefore, no say in our nation's Medicaid policy.

NO TO FULL DEMOCRACY D.C. residents have limited democracy. Every single law that the D.C. City Council passes and the mayor signs is subject to a veto by Congress. In fact, local laws do not go into effect until after 30 “legislative days,” which means some laws can languish for months before going into effect. This practice is a violation of the very basic American tenet of federalism — citizens have control over local issues.

OVERSIGHT BY CONGRESS — LOST CHANCES AT ADOPTION FOR FOSTER KIDS

Several years ago, D.C.'s reimbursement formula for Medicaid and related programs was increased so that the federal government pays 70 percent. But, because of a Congressional oversight in drafting the formula, the federal share of funding to place foster children for adoption was not raised. That means that D.C. is losing approximately \$6 million a year for foster children's adoption — money that D.C. could and should be spending to place more children who are desperately in need of stable homes for permanent adoption.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAM — 80 PERCENT OF D.C. SENIORS EXCLUDED

While prescription drug coverage for seniors was widely supported, many of the specific elements of the “Medicare Part D” program that Congress enacted in 2003 provoked substantial opposition from members of Congress. The House vote on passage was 215-215. D.C.'s Delegate to the House did not have a vote either for or against the bill.

QUID PRO QUO — CONGRESS' PLAYGROUND

In the mid-90s, Rep. Randy (Duke) Cunningham, R. Calif., was vice chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee on the District of Columbia. He lived on a houseboat at the Washington marina, near the fish market. He put \$3 million into the District's 1999 appropriations to renovate the marina/fish market area. But rather than use a competitive bidding process as D.C. officials wanted, he insisted that future occupancy leases for the wharf and marina be awarded to the particular people he chose, as quid pro quo for the \$3 million.

REVENUE LIMITATIONS — D.C. TAX-BASE REDUCED

Unlike all 41 states that have income taxes, Washington, D.C. does not tax the income earned by non-residents. That is because Congress expressly prohibits such a “commuter tax” — indeed, the prohibition, contained in D.C.'s Charter, was a condition of home rule in 1973. The tax revenues lost to D.C. each year from the commuter tax ban are estimated to range from \$530 million to \$1.4 billion.

SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS — CONGRESS PREVENTS PREVENTION In 1999, Congress prevented D.C. from using federal and local funds for syringe exchange programs, even though they are the best way to prevent drug users from spreading HIV/AIDS through their needles. In D.C., injection drug use is the most common path of HIV infection among women, and the second most common among men.

TAX CUTS FOR THE RICH OR HEALTH CARE FOR KIDS? On May 17, 2006, President Bush signed a bill to extend the 2003 capital gains and dividend income tax cuts, amounting to at least \$70 billion. In our nation's capital, as throughout the country, the benefits are almost entirely going to the very rich, with the wealthiest one percent of D.C. taxpayers getting 64 percent of the tax cuts, \$17 million in all. The impact of this bill is likely to be severe for D.C. residents. According to the Children's Defense Fund, that \$17 million could in 2009 buy health insurance coverage for fully 7,600 uninsured D.C. children. D.C. residents have no vote, and, therefore, no say in our nation's tax policy.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS — D.C. JOBLESS GET NO RELIEF In 2003, D.C.'s unemployment rate was 7.2 percent, the fourth highest in the nation, and well above the national average of six percent. Congress refused to extend unemployment benefits for jobless workers living in the shadow of the Capitol building.

VETERANS' BENEFITS AND JOBS: CONGRESS JUST SAID NO — BARELY In 2006, the U.S. House rejected by one vote \$53 million for additional services for veterans returning from the Iraq War, including combat-related trauma care, follow-up care, prosthetic research, war orphans' benefits, and claims processing. In 2000, there were 44,484 veterans in D.C. — two-thirds of whom were African-American — including about 5,000 veterans of the 1991 Gulf war.

WORKERS' WAGES: SHUT OUT OF THE DEBATE For years, Congress refused to enact an increase in the minimum wage. D.C. residents have no vote, and, therefore, no say in our nation's wage policies.

YOUTH PRIDE: THE IMPACT OF FEELING POWERLESS When D.C. youth are confronted with the reality of their disfranchisement, it can have a real psychological effect. During a program where student delegates went up to the Hill to visit their representatives, a D.C. high school student recalled her feelings that day: "I have never before felt inferior to fellow Americans. All I could do was listen at dinner that evening when my friends told of how they had discussed important national issues. I, too, have opinions on these and other vital issues. That day, I could share them with no one who had a voice or a vote in the United States Congress."

ZONE OF PROTECTION — PROTECTING PLANNED PARENTHOOD CLINIC USERS Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington provides health and family-planning services at its five clinic locations to the D.C. metropolitan area. For years, the clinics have been targeted by demonstrators who bar access to their clients. To protect their clients, Planned Parenthood would like the D.C. City Council to pass a D.C. law creating buffer zones around family planning clinics. But concerns about Congressional reaction create a potential barrier to passing such a local law.

If you're concerned about the denial of voting rights and self-government to our nation's capital, please share this information with your friends and your U.S. Senators and Representative.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, VISIT DCVOTE.ORG



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