



Congressman José E. Serrano

Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government

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Opening Statement of Chairman José E. Serrano Hearing on the District of Columbia's Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Request April 30, 2008

Today the subcommittee will hear testimony on the FY 2009 budget for the District of Columbia. I'd like to welcome Mayor Adrian Fenty back to testify before this subcommittee.

The subcommittee also welcomes back the Chairman of the District's City Council, Vincent Gray, and the Chief Financial Officer for the District, Dr. Natwar Gandhi.

With the new leadership within the District of Columbia, this past year and a half has brought much excitement and anticipation for the residents of this city. Issues such as school reform and a slowing economy continued to make headlines in this region.

I, myself, have been able to visit one of the most exciting new attractions, which is the new Nationals baseball stadium.

I am aware that the fiscal year 2009 budget is currently under review by the City Council and will not be received by Congress for at least another month. The request is for a total of \$9.9 billion, including \$6.1 billion in local funds, nearly a \$140 million increase over 2008 levels.

For FY 2009, the District has requested \$155 million in direct federal payments. Notable increases over the FY 2008 enacted levels are for the Water and Sewer Authority, Emergency Planning and Security and for the DC Schools.

The increase for DC Schools includes a one time payment of \$20 million to "Jump Start Public School Reform". I look forward to hearing more today about your plans in this area.

As I have stated on previous occasions, I am honored to have the opportunity to work with the DC government to help it achieve its objectives. Since assuming chairmanship of this subcommittee, it has been my goal to ensure that Congress, specifically the

Appropriations Committee plays a supportive role in the District, rather than an instructive role, as has been the case in years past. As a native of Puerto Rico, a territory which shares the District's condition of having an undefined political status, I sympathize with your plight and offer my support for full representation in Congress for DC residents.

It is nice to see all three of you again, Mayor Fenty, Dr. Ghandi and Chairman Gray. I thank you all for your hard work and dedication to the city. It truly seems that there is a new energy in this city, and I credit your leadership.

I know that my staff finds your staffs very open and easy to work with. I hope that relationship continues until the day when I achieve my goal – putting myself out of business when it comes to overseeing DC.

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Congressman José E. Serrano has represented the Bronx in Congress since 1990. He is the Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government.