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The Harm of Excessive Safety

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Throughout the pandemic, the American public experienced a new uproar in the culture of excessive safety. Safety is something to strive for, but excessive rules and regulations that diminish life are incredibly harmful, especially if they do little or no good. We take risks every day, and instead of pretending to eliminate them with what has been called “security theater,” we should inform people and let them make their own informed decisions.

Safety is something to strive for, but excessive rules and regulations that diminish life are incredibly harmful, especially if they do little or no good.

Consider speed limits on the highway. We could drastically reduce the fatality of car accidents, while cutting gas consumption and encouraging more people to take public transportation, by lowering the speed limit to 30 miles per hour. We do not implement such a law because it would drastically reduce the quality of life and would not be followed.

We see a similar situation in the pandemic. There is a lot of inherent risk in communal housing, in-person classes, and socializing with our peers as these arbitrary rules that no one follows lord over us. Even something as simple as social distancing -- the most important rule for fighting the virus, and necessary in order for masking to be effective -- is not followed. Desks may be separated by six feet, and we may have dots littered on the floor to create a perfect Voronoi diagram. Yet we still pretend that everything is normal when we grab

our food or party with our “cohorts.”

We performatively police each other’s behaviors, while making exceptions for our own. Nobody truly follows the rules. The gain is slight, and those who are especially worried or vulnerable can feel free to take extra precautions and ask their friends to do the same. Instead of pretending that we follow the guidelines, we should accept that the cost they impose on us is not worth the gain. If the cost were worth it, we would be following the guidelines and even taking extra measures.

Professors and high-risk individuals have now been vaccinated. People who get COVID-19 will experience very mild symptoms, and those who suspect they are high-risk can take extra precautions. We do not eliminate peanuts from the dining hall because a

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few have deadly allergies to them. We simply label the food, and the people with allergies carry around EpiPens.

Because of our remarkable testing regime, we can quantify the level of COVID risk that each of us is exposing ourselves to and adjust appropriately. (Thankfully, it seems that the college administration understands this, because the violation they take most seriously is missing tests for the virus.) That means we could have full classes, a normal dining hall, and an end to the blue Adirondack chairs which supposedly decrease the spread significantly more than a table or regular furniture. We could end the semester without the isolation, and anxiety, that comes with the inconsistent enforcement of these rules.

D.C. Deserves Statehood

By CARTER BRIGLIA
STAFF WRITER

The Washington, D.C. Admission Act sponsored by Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton has gained considerable attention in the past year. It would establish statehood for the District of Columbia, which would allow residents voting representation in Congress for the first time. The Committee on Oversight and Reform voted 25-19 in favor of the bill on April 14, paving the way for a House floor vote in the coming weeks. H.R. 51 passed the House in the last Congress on a partisan vote of 232-180, but it died in the Republican-controlled Senate. A companion bill, S. 51, has been introduced in the Senate with support of Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, but is expected to be met with Republican opposition by filibuster.

Washington, D.C.’s lack of statehood is harshly unrepresentative. Since its residents do not belong to any state, they have no representation (by voting members) in either house. But despite having no votes in Congress, the city’s residents pay federal taxes.

This results in taxation without representation, since they have no say in how their tax dollars are used. In fact, D.C. residents pay the highest per-capita federal income taxes in the country, and collectively pay more in federal income tax than the residents of 22 other states.

Providing statehood to the District would also be a large step for racial justice in the United States, since its population is 46 percent Black and 11 percent Hispanic. The Senate systematically overrepresents white voters and underrepresents voters of color, as states like Wyoming and Vermont, which are more than 90 percent white and have fewer people than

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D.C., both have two senators just like large states. If D.C. were to become a state, it would be the first with a plurality of Black residents, a considerable step toward giving

their party gain two more Senate seats. Republican leaders including Mitch McConnell view the idea of D.C. statehood not as a matter of representation, but as a partisan

American citizens federal representation; it is the right thing to do for people who live in the District. The political ideologies of D.C. voters are

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people of color the representation they deserve in Congress. Raphael Warnock's victory in Georgia in January made him the eleventh African-American to serve in the Senate in U.S. history. Currently,

attempt by Democrats to change the rules of an established system to gain extra votes in the Senate.

Considering the Senate's current composition, evenly split between Democrats and Republicans,

irrelevant to the principle that they deserve representation, since they are American citizens and pay federal taxes. Establishing D.C. statehood would be a major achievement for racial justice

... I believe there is nothing partisan about giving American citizens federal representation; it is the right thing to do for people who live in the District.

three senators are African American (Raphael Warnock, Cory Booker, and Tim Scott), and establishing statehood for D.C. could expand this group. Given the country's partisan gridlock, the statehood efforts have been met with opposition from Republican politicians, who believe the Democratic Party is using the issue to help

making D.C. a state would very likely increase the Democrats' chances of controlling the Senate in future years. With the critical importance of Senate majorities and the current and recent close partisan balances there, it is understandable why Republicans would be unwilling to expand the Senate.

However, I believe there is nothing partisan about giving

and equal representation in our democracy. While there are certainly political repercussions, any hesitation toward it should be secondary to the importance of federal representation for all citizens living in the United States.

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