

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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INFRASTRUCTURE**

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PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT
AVIATION
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT



**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515**

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INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION
EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS,
PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE

**Statement of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton on
H.J.Res. 44, Further Continuing Appropriations Amendments, 2011
Committee on Rules
February 28, 2011**

My amendment would prevent an unintended catastrophe for the 600,000 residents of the District of Columbia, as well as for the federal government, by authorizing the District to spend its own local taxpayer-raised funds for the remainder of fiscal year 2011. If this joint resolution becomes law without my amendment, the District of Columbia government would shut down if the federal government shuts down after March 18, 2011.

Although the District raises and manages its own \$8 billion budget, Congress technically appropriates these local funds to the District, a holdover and throwback to the pre-home-rule period. Under both the current short-term continuing resolution and this joint resolution, the District's authority to spend its local funds expires when these resolutions do. Members who were not here during the last federal government shutdown are probably unaware that the District government was forced to shut down, too, because, although the District government had passed its budget months earlier, Congress had not yet voted for final approval. I am grateful that after the first of several government shutdowns and partial shutdowns, Speaker Newt Gingrich and I worked together to ensure that the District remained operating. The dispute now, as then, over the federal budget has nothing to do with the District's local funds. I do not believe any member wants to shut down the D.C. government and bring a large, complicated city to its knees because of a purely federal matter, and I cannot believe that any member would object to this amendment to keep the city open and allow it to continue spending its local funds for the remainder of this fiscal year. D.C. residents are not alone in relying on vital District services. Federal officials, including the president, federal buildings, foreign embassies and dignitaries, and businesses rely daily on the city's services, as well. If the District shut down, in addition to all the vital municipal services that would cease, the District could default under certain financing agreements and leases. For example, the District has a master equipment lease under which it leases a wide range of equipment, including public safety vehicles, computer hardware, energy management systems, homeland security and surveillance equipment, laboratory equipment, road maintenance equipment, snow removal equipment, traffic lights, crosswalk signals, and lighting, electrical and plumbing. The District's next payment under the master lease is due March 25. The equipment would be subject to repossession for non-payment.

When a reporter inquired last Friday, House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers said that the District should be able to spend its local funds if the federal government shuts down, but

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not, of course, the limited direct federal funds it receives. My amendment authorizes only the city's local budget. I urge its inclusion in this joint resolution.