

A RESOLUTION

15-86

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

April 1, 2003

To declare, on an emergency basis, the sense of the Council on the need to have public parks and spaces in the District of Columbia open for public expression of free speech.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the "Sense of the Council on Maintaining Open Spaces for Demonstrations in the District of Columbia Emergency Resolution of 2003".

Sec. 2. The Council finds that:

(1) There exists an immediate need in the District of Columbia ("District") to increase the availability of public parks for residents of and visitors to the District to exercise their right to free speech through demonstrations.

(2) Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the Council has seen numerous occasions on which people who have had a desire to demonstrate in public parks have been unable to do so because the parks had been closed to demonstrations.

(3) In the past, such demonstrations commonly were conducted in Lafayette Park, which is located across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. This location had previously given demonstrators the feeling that they were expressing their viewpoints directly to the President of the United States.

(4) Unfortunately, Lafayette Park and many other public parks have been closed to the public for demonstrations.

(5) The closure of Lafayette Park and other public parks causes an unnecessary problem, in that the demonstrators who were hoping to exercise their First Amendment rights in the park are now migrating into H Street and other District streets to exercise these rights. This alternative location to demonstrate has put a severe strain on the residents of the District and on those people trying to commute through an area where the street may have to be closed.

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Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that maintaining public parks open for such demonstrations and exercises of free speech would provide a valuable aid to the functions and operations of the District as it would help to maintain a smooth flow of traffic throughout the District.

Sec. 4. The Secretary to the Council shall transmit a copy of this resolution to the officers of both houses of Congress and to the Delegate for the District of Columbia.

Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately.