

I am Rev. Graylan Scott Hagler, Senior Minister, Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ and Director, Faith Strategies. I am here today to ask that the DC City Council not overturn the votes of its citizens, but instead find a way forward that allows the will of the voters to be respected and carve out a way to get towards where Initiative 77 is trying to go.

The repealing of Initiative 77 sends a terrible message to the citizens of the District of Columbia. First among those messages is that the votes of DC citizens do not count, and only counts if it congruent with industry and economic interest and if it is not congruent with those interests then for the vote to be disregarded. The second among terrible statements is that though every ward voted for the Initiative and the only Ward to slightly defeat the Initiative was Ward 3, traditionally known as a rich and White ward and therefore sends the message that every other ward in the city must comply to the electoral perspective of ward 3. These optic seems racist to many of us in the city. What further smacks of racism is that we decry voter suppression all around the country, and we may dress up what is going on here with all kinds of seemingly rational rhetoric but currently this Council and the Chairman of this Council is engaged in the disenfranchising DC voters.

Mr. Mendelson I got a victorious and self-congratulatory email from you after the primary citing the turn out for you in Ward 7 and 8, which also voted for Initiative 77 but you insinuated that those who voted for Initiative 77 as did not know what they were voting for and therefore the vote was illegitimate. Using that same rationale I guess they didn't realize they were voting for you either and your vote should be rendered illegitimate, but I doubt that you see your vote in the same light.

I met with Pastors across the city and to suggest that my members and the members of our congregations did not know what they were voting for is condensing and patronizing.

How can we speak about the colonial nature of DC, the right for self-determination, the desires for a full delegation in congress and the right to vote when we crush the vote that has been voted.

Council members if you don't like what the voters voted, and you think it could be better then you need to have the discussion to make it better. You need to lead in working out a compromise that gives all a chance - where the voters are upheld, and tipped workers are strengthened. To simply repeal is to end the discussion, deny the vote,

discourage voting because to wipe out what was voted it to tell people that your votes don't count.

Finally I would suggest that if all the people who turned out here for this hearing had voted, then we might not have this dilemma before us today. You cannot have it both ways - votes make decisions in our country, and votes have consequences and if you didn't vote that also has consequences.

TESTIMONY OF REV. WANDA THOMPSON REGARDING INITIATIVE 77 BEFORE THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

D.C. COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER 17, 2018

Good Day Members of the Council. I am Rev. Wanda Thompson, a resident living in, and a pastor serving in, Ward Eight in the city. I am here today to strongly encourage your committee to honor the voting outcome of Initiative 77 for which the residents of every Ward in this city, except Ward Three, voted. I am not here to discuss which position you or I personally support. I am, however, here to remind you that we, the citizens of the District of Columbia, have the right to say what we want to happen in our city. When you consider repealing Initiative 77, you are, in fact, acting in a paternalistic, condescending manner, suggesting that you know better than the citizens who elected you what should happen.

I, along with so many here, believe that the right to vote and to have your voice heard is a sacred right. It came as a result of the hard fought efforts of our foreparents. Certainly there will be times when legislation is passed with which any one of us might disagree. Nonetheless, it is imperative that the voice of the people be heard. To disregard and overturn the will of the people essentially is to suppress the vote. I encourage my D.C. congregants to vote but I do not tell them how they should vote.

In an era when voter suppression is rearing its ugly head, it is particularly important to remember that any move to quash the vote of the people is tantamount to disenfranchisement. Some have argued that the initiative should be repealed because of low voter turnout. The truth is that many folks do not come to the polls for exactly this reason – that they believe it will not matter how and for what they vote. Any action on your part to deny people their right to vote by negating their vote will only further perpetuate this belief.

I urge you not to vote to repeal the initiative because the business community wants you to, but to allow the citizens' votes to enact Initiative 77 to be enacted because, as your constituencies, we have elected you to represent OUR interests.

I hope that you will listen to those citizens who exercised their civic duty in voting and not be deterred by any other influences. Please do not minimize or disparage either those who voted or those who did not because they did not feel it would matter. Would any of you step down from your office if the voter turnout that put you in office was low? NO, I think you would say that those who did vote should have their voices heard.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

September 17, 2018

Re: Initiative 77 Repeal

Greetings Council,

My name is Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr. I am a Ward 7 resident and have served the Washington, D.C. community as a licensed and ordained Baptist Minister for 29 years. I am here today in favor of Initiative 77 and ask that you do not repeal the people's vote. There are reasons why the Council should not repeal this vote of your constituents. Those reasons are:

1. The Democratic Party, nationally, is on record as being for Workers Rights and Fair Wages. It would be very hypocritical for you to tow the company line nationally, but locally you are behaving like a republican politician, who is making life easier for big business instead of standing with and for the workers.
2. Voter Suppression is the 2<sup>nd</sup> reason why, as a democratic party member you can't repeal the people's vote. How can you stand with others in the National Party, national and local organizations against voter suppression in other voting blocks (especially in the south) but yet here in the nation's capitol, you are considering to suppress the will and the vote of the people.
3. The 3<sup>rd</sup> issue why this repeal can't go forward is because of the moral and race issue that is associated with tipping. You have the opportunity to correct a wrong that this country has created. From what I read, Tipping is a system birthed out of slavery. When slavery became unlawful, the business community decided to continue to use the free and cheap labor under the disguise of tipping. And now in 2018, big business is at it again. They put major money in the campaign to go against Initiative 77, and still lost. You have the opportunity to be on the right side of history, stand with the people and not big business.
4. Lastly, the reason that you can not repeal this bill is because Initiative 77 effects the quality of life here in Washington, D.C. From what I have read, those cities who have moved into this direction, has shown a deduction in crime, homelessness, domestic violence and other issues that are rooted in poverty. Any negative articles, or opinions have just been that – opinions. Big Business is trying to bully the city in this repeal, with projections. But the truth is that other cities are doing well who have moved in the right direction. It is a shame that in 2018, we still have a working homelessness group of people in Washington D.C. It is a shame that in 2018, that we still have homeless children who go to school every day. Today Councilmembers, you can change our trajectory by staying with the people.

As I close, I thank you for this opportunity.

Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr.