



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
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**Thomas Introduces Bill Restricting Issuance of Government Contracts
to Firms Failing to Comply With Council Subpoenas and
Strengthens “Public Land Surplus Standards Act of 2009” at First Reading**

Washington DC—At the Council’s December 1, 2009 legislative session, Ward 5 Councilmember Harry “Tommy” Thomas, Jr., Chair of the Council’s Committee on Libraries, Parks and Recreation, introduced legislation to restrict the District government’s ability to contract with firms that fail to comply with Council subpoenas. Specifically, the “Subpoena Compliance Act of 2009” establishes that failure to comply with a subpoena issued by the Council, or standing committee of the Council, shall result in ineligibility to receive District contracts or funds for a period of five years, unless otherwise approved by the Council.

Late last week, Councilmember Thomas received notification that, despite being subpoenaed, the principals of two companies with District contracts were declining to testify before the December 2, 2009 Joint Public Oversight Roundtable on the Contracting Process Related to Parks and Recreation Projects. The two firms are the recipients of Department of Parks and Recreation capital project contracts routed circuitously via memorandums of understanding from the agency through the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development to the DC Housing Authority.

“When the Council is faced with situations where the transfer of approximately \$100 million of taxpayers dollars is in question, and contractors with vital information on the topic have decided that they will not comply with Council subpoenas, based on their schedules, or any other reason, it is imperative that action is taken to ensure immediate protection of District funds and our oversight responsibilities,” stated Councilmember Thomas when he introduced the bill. “Because accountability of our residents’ tax dollars appears not be a priority for certain contractors, this bill will act as either an incentive to get meaningful cooperation with the Council, or as a tool to weed out ‘bad actors’ for five years who decide to scoff at accountability for millions of taxpayer dollars.”

Also at the December 1st legislative session, Councilmember Thomas successfully amended Bill 18-76, the “Public Land Surplus Standards Act of 2009,” to require the District Department of Real Estate Services create and make available on its public website a database of all real property owned by the District of Columbia; maintain a facilities condition assessment of all District-owned property, to be updated on a five-year rolling basis; and establish a District Facilities Planning Advisory Committee to provide advice, comments, and recommendations to the Council regarding the District Facilities Plan. “I am pleased that my colleagues supported my amendments. I look forward to the second reading of this bill, which will move us one step closer to creating a rigorous and much-needed process for surplusing District-owned properties,” stated Councilmember Thomas.

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