



# The Thomas Connection

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Building Bridges, Finding Solutions

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*The Newsletter of Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr.*



## Season's Greetings

Dear Ward 5 Residents,

As the year draws to a close, I extend my best wishes to you and yours for a safe, joyous, and healthy holiday season. In this time of gratitude and reflection, I thank you for your continued support. The opportunity to serve Ward 5 during a second term is one of the greatest gifts I have been privileged to receive. I remain humbled by the honor of representing Ward 5 on the Council of the District of Columbia.

While the District's budget challenges are sobering and will require the government to tighten its belt on spending, I remain committed to bringing change to Ward 5. As we chart the course for Ward 5 in 2011 and beyond, I pledge to:

- Bring economic revitalization to our underserved neighborhoods;
- Connect our residents to jobs and assist them in becoming job-ready;
- Include the voice of the people in education reform;
- Support a strong and robust local business community; and
- Remain visible and accessible to residents, and address their issues and concerns.

As your Councilmember, I will continue building bridges among all of our residents, finding solutions to your issues and concerns, and putting you, the people of Ward 5, first.

In Service I Remain,

*Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr.*

Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr.  
Ward 5 Councilmember

## THOMAS STRENGTHENS WARD 5 PORTIONS OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Recognizing that the District's Comprehensive Plan is an important tool for encouraging and guiding development in Ward 5, Councilmember Thomas added a number of amendments to Bill 18-867, "The Comprehensive Plan Amendment Act of 2010," to strengthen the plan's treatment of several Ward 5 neighborhood business corridors. The bill had its second reading on November 23, 2010, after which it was transmitted to the Mayor.

The Comprehensive Plan is a general policy document that provides overall guidance for future planning and development of the city. The most recent Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2006. Bill 18-867 represents the first opportunity in four years for the Council to consider amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. Councilmember Thomas' amendments include the following new policies:

- **Policy UNE-2.2.6: Extension of H Street NE Arts District:** Work with area stakeholders to develop a strategy for promoting development of an arts district along the eastern end of Florida Avenue NE by considering: linkages with the H Street NE arts and entertainment district and planned development on lower Bladensburg Road; support of additional development on the corridor; and support of visual improvements.
- **Policy UNE-2.6.4: Brookland's 12<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor:** In consultation with property owners, community groups, and residents, use zoning, incentives, and other tools to facilitate mixed-use projects with retail and service uses at street level, and with residential and commercial uses on upper stories. Create productive synergies between 12<sup>th</sup> Street and planned adjacent economic development projects; assist with connectivity and parking policies; ensure quality project designs; and encourage voluntary preservation of buildings on 12<sup>th</sup> Street most emblematic of Brookland's history and character.

Councilmember Thomas also put forth several amendments to expand and update existing policies (new text is underlined):

- **Policy UNE-2.5.1: Rhode Island Avenue/Brentwood Metro Station:** Encourage the development of additional medium-to high-density mixed use development around the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station, particularly on the surface parking lots in the station vicinity. Review the Rhode Island properties west of and proximate to the Rhode Island Avenue Metro station for transit connections and appropriate land use recommendations.

- **Policy UNE-2.2.1: Mixed Use Development Along Benning and Bladensburg:** Improve the overall appearance of Benning and Bladensburg Roads in the vicinity of Hechinger Mall. Pursue opportunities for additional pedestrian-oriented mixed use development fronting on these streets, including ground floor retail uses, particularly uses consistent with creating an arts and entertainment district, and upper floor housing. Such development should be linked to transportation investments along these streets, including the proposed streetcar along H Street/Benning Road.

"The Comprehensive Plan is our roadmap for the future," said Councilmember Thomas. "We need to ensure this document provides the guidance necessary for development of Ward 5 during the next 20 years."

## WALMART'S FLAGSHIP DC STORE TO BE LOCATED IN WARD 5

As part of its strategy to enter urban markets, Wal-Mart has identified four sites in the District of Columbia for future stores, including one in Ward 5. The Ward 5 site will be the flagship location: a 16-acre parcel at New York Avenue and Bladensburg Road, NE, that will be home to the largest Wal-Mart to open in the District. The Ward 5 store, planned to be 120,000 square feet, will be built first and include a grocery section.

In addition to Wal-Mart, the 16-acre parcel is expected to offer a second large retailer and a number of smaller stores. Construction should commence in 2012. In addition to roughly 100 temporary construction jobs, the Ward 5 project will create between 800 to 900 permanent jobs, including 300 jobs at Wal-Mart alone. The project development team has committed to working with the Ward 5 council office to ensure that Ward 5 residents are considered for the construction and permanent positions the project will create.

"I am excited that Wal-Mart recognizes that Ward 5 is an ideal location for its largest DC store," said Councilmember Thomas. "Connecting residents to the jobs this project will create is one of my biggest goals for my second term in office."



A Wal-Mart is planned for New York Avenue and Bladensburg Road, NE.

## THOMAS' 2010 LEGISLATIVE RECORD DEMONSTRATES COMMITMENT TO RESIDENTS

Councilmember Thomas introduced or co-introduced the following bills since January 2010:

**JOB GROWTH INCENTIVE ACT OF 2010 (A18-0414)**—Amends the DC Code to create a job growth tax credit and establishes how businesses can qualify for the job growth tax credit, the method for determining the value of the job growth tax credit, and the procedure for granting and administering the job growth tax credit.

**PEOPLE'S COUNSEL HOLDOVER EXTENSION EMERGENCY AMENDMENT ACT OF 2010 (A18-0345)**—Allows, on an emergency basis, the People's Counsel for the Public Service Commission to extend the holdover period of the People's Counsel until a successor is confirmed.

**DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION MENTORSHIP PROGRAM EMERGENCY AMENDMENT ACT OF 2010 (A18-0367)**—On an emergency basis, establishes a Department of Parks and Recreation Capital Project Mentorship Program so that the department can learn best practices from the Office of Public Education Facilities Modernization and Reform's capital projects department, and establishes reporting requirements for Certified Business Enterprise and District resident participation in these capital projects.

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS TEACHER REINSTATEMENT EMERGENCY ACT OF 2010 (A18-0425)**—Requires, on an emergency basis, that the Office of the Chief Financial Officer submit to the Council a written determination on whether the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) has a surplus in its fiscal year 2010 budget and if its reduction-in-force action was based on an accounting error, and if so, requires the DCPS to submit a feasibility plan on the possible reinstatement of separated faculty and staff.

**BROOKLAND STREETScape EMERGENCY ACT OF 2010 (A18-0427)**—Requires, on an emergency basis, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer to determine the funds remaining for the 12th Street streetscape project, and for the District Department of Transportation to have a 90-day moratorium on any expenditures of non-committed funds for the project in order to work with Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5A on a plan for the remaining phases for the 12th Street streetscape project, including the option of placing utility lines underground.

**DOROTHY IRENE HEIGHT MEMORIAL LIBRARY DESIGNATION ACT OF 2010 (A18-0500)**—Designates the Benning Neighborhood Library, located at 3935 Benning Road, N.E., as the Dorothy Irene Height Memorial Library.

**SUMMER POOL SAFETY EMERGENCY ACT OF 2010 (A18-0487)**—Requires, on an emergency basis, that the Mayor issue an annual report regarding the safety standards for District-operated public swimming pools.

**M.M. WASHINGTON CAREER HIGH SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT GRANT AUTHORIZATION EMERGENCY ACT OF 2010 (A18-0529)**—Authorizes, on an emergency basis, a grant to support redevelopment of the Margaret Murray Washington Career High School.

**DCPL FEDERAL GRANT AUTHORIZATION EMERGENCY ACT OF 2010 (A18-0513)**—Authorizes, on an emergency basis, the District of Columbia Public Library to make expenditures pursuant to a federal grant to provide computer skills training.

**STREETScape UTILITY LINE REPORT EMERGENCY ACT OF 2010 (A18-0587)**—Requires, on an emergency basis, that the Mayor to issue a detailed report within 14 days regarding utility lines along 12th Street, N.E. to the Council and the Office of the Chief Financial Officer.

**SAVING DC HOMES FROM DISCLOSURE ACT OF 2010 (B18-0691)**—Requires mortgage lenders to provide homeowners with a notice of default on residential mortgages, and provides homeowners with the right to engage in mediation prior to foreclosure on residential mortgages. First reading was held on November 9, 2010.

**CAPITAL ACCESS PROGRAM ACT OF 2010 (B18-1042)**—Establishes a capital access program to encourage financial institutions to lend capital to small- and medium-sized businesses and nonprofit organizations located in the District by providing a source of reimbursement for losses on loans. First reading was held on November 9, 2010.

**SCHOOL DAY EXPANSION ACT (B18-1043)**—Requires the length of a school day in District of Columbia Public Schools to be expanded to seven hours. A hearing date has not yet been scheduled.

**HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION PREVENTION ACT OF 2010 (B18-1057)**—Establishes policies in public schools and recreation facilities to prohibit harassment, intimidation, and bullying, and establishes prevention programs. Hearing was held on November 29, 2010.

## COUNCIL ADDRESSES DISTRICT'S FY2011 BUDGET SHORTFALL

During December, the Council will address the \$188 million gap the District of Columbia currently faces in its operating budget for Fiscal Year 2011. The gap is based on revised figures from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer indicating \$99.8 million less in projected local revenue and \$88.1 million in projected agency overspending, such as special education cost overruns, salary increases, higher health and life insurance costs, and fewer federal dollars than expected.

The Council received the Mayor's budget gap proposal on November 22, 2010, and held a public hearing on the legislation on November 30, 2010 at which more than 75 people testified. The Council will vote on the bill at its December 7, 2010 legislative session.

After resolving the \$188 million gap on Fiscal Year 2011, the District still faces an estimated gap of about \$345 million in Fiscal Year 2012 when the baseline budget is released. Among the sources of this gap are higher than expected spending in areas such as debt service, Medicaid, District employee benefits, as well as less than expected federal dollars, repayment of funds for the United Medical Center, and local publications for city programs previously paid for with one-time federal contributions.

The District's capital budget poses serious challenges, as well. Since 2002, the District's outstanding debt has more than doubled, from \$3.5 billion to \$7.1 billion. With recent reductions in revenue, about \$120 million needs to be eliminated each year from the District's annual capital improvements plan to stay

## THOMAS TURKEY GIVEAWAY AIDS WARD 5 FAMILIES IN NEED

On November 22, 2010, Councilmember Thomas continued a Ward 5 tradition initiated by his father—the Thanksgiving Turkey Giveaway to families in need. Councilmember Thomas distributed more than 400 turkeys, with Greater Mount Calvary Holy Church serving as the distribution point.

"Thanksgiving is a time to join with family and friends and reflect on the many things for which we have to be thankful," said Councilmember Thomas. "It is also a time to reach out and give to others in our community. Providing holiday meals was a very important Ward 5 tradition that my father initiated when he was in office. I am honored to continue that tradition today."

## STATE OF THE DISTRICT'S BUDGET AND FINANCES

### Fiscal Year 2011 Gap: \$187.8 million

- The revenue estimate for FY2011 was reduced by \$99.8 million.
- The \$88 million in spending pressures include:
  - ◆ \$31.7 million for DCPS related to special education cost overruns;
  - ◆ \$10 million for the Disability Compensation Fund for unpaid federal life and health insurance premium costs;
  - ◆ \$33.2 million for E-FMAP savings compared to the amount budgeted;
  - ◆ \$10.1 million for special education transportation to cover unbudgeted salary increases and rent cost overruns; and
  - ◆ \$3 million to repay the first half of the funds borrowed from the Contingency Cash Reserve as a loan to United Medical Center.

### Fiscal Year 2012 Additional Structural Gap: \$345.1 Million

- \$186.2 million being used to balance FY2011 budget.
- \$67.8 million in spending inflation growth above projected growth for debt service, Medicaid, District employee benefits, and District employee post-retirement benefits;
- \$78.1 million of Medicaid, E-FMAP, stimulus funds that provide higher reimbursement rates in FY2011 than FY2012;
- \$10 million for backfilling a one-time federal payment for DHS Housing First Program that would have to be funded through local funds in FY2012; and
- \$3 million for the repayment to the Contingency Cash Reserve of the second 50 percent borrowed for United Medical Center.

## COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS' DECEMBER 2010 EVENTS

<b>December 15</b>	Ward 5 Holiday Party
<b>December 18</b>	Breakfast With Santa

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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