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**Council Passes Thomas Amendments to Crime Bill**  
***Measures Eliminate Jury Requirement for Simple Assault Prosecutions, Tighten Gun Registration for Gun Offenders, and Preserve District's Disorderly Conduct Statute***

**Washington DC**—At the Council's legislative session today, Ward 5 Councilmember Harry "Tommy" Thomas, Jr. introduced three amendments to the "Omnibus Public Safety and Justice Amendment Act of 2009" during the bill's first reading. The amendments, each of which was approved by the Council, eliminate from the bill the jury requirement for simple assault prosecutions; create more stringent gun registry procedures for gun offenders; and preserve the District's disorderly conduct statute.

The "Omnibus Public Safety and Justice Amendment Act of 2009," as originally drafted, made simple assault a jury demandable offense by increasing the penalty from 180 days to one year. One of Councilmember Thomas' amendments strikes this change. "I am concerned that modification of the simple assault statute will overburden our judicial system," said Councilmember Thomas. "The DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) typically makes more than 4,000 simple assault arrests annually. If just half of those cases were to go to trial, hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars would be spent in court overtime." Thomas also expressed concern that the provision might draw out domestic violence cases, many of which are simple assault prosecutions, creating the potential to put victims in harms way.

Another amendment Councilmember Thomas introduced creates more stringent Gun Offender Registry requirements for gun offenders. This amendment also authorizes MPD to collect information on the offender's driver's license number, and his or her work and school address, where applicable, both of which are required by the Baltimore and New York City laws. "We should adopt best practices from other jurisdictions that have proven effective in combating crime," said Thomas.

The "Omnibus Public Safety and Justice Amendment Act of 2009," as originally written, repealed the District's unlawful assembly statute and significantly revised its disorderly conduct statute, both of which have served the District well for more than a century. The third Thomas amendment strikes this language, thereby preserving the city's disorderly conduct regulations. "In an urban environment like the District, our law enforcement officers need to enforce quality of life crimes that, if left unchecked, can unravel the peace and tranquility of a neighborhood," said Councilmember Thomas.

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