

Verizon Jumbotron Billboard Act (B-19-0517)

Councilmember Yvette Alexander, Chair of the DC's Council Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs has introduced a bill (B-19-0517) that will allow the Verizon Center ("Center") to install up to nine (9) lighted and animated exterior jumbotron billboards of any size and at any location on the Center and exempting these billboards from the regulations that apply to all other billboards in the city. A hearing on the bill has been scheduled for Monday, January 23, 2012, at 2:00 PM. It will be held at the Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Room 123. The Deadline to sign up for testifying is COB Friday, January 20.

The struggle to regulate and control billboards in the District has been going on since 1931 and most recently last year. There's an ongoing effort to see that we have a reasonable, consistent, equitable, comprehensive, citywide policy. There are also some who continue to look for (or create) loopholes to meet their specific, personal needs. That's not right!

A growing number of organizations and individuals are concerned that this is bad legislation and a frightening precedent. Opponents are encouraged to:

- Sign up to testify at the January 23 hearing: The more witnesses testifying against this bill the better. To testify contact Melanie Williamson, Legislative Counsel for the Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs at (202) 741-2112 or via email at mwilliamson@dccouncil.us.
- Attend the hearing. While testifying is very important, simply attending the hearing and being part of the crowd whose presence will be known to be in opposition to the bill.
- Contact Committee members and the rest of the Council to let them know you oppose the bill. Emails, voice mails, letters, etc. (Contact information for the Council below along with a sample of what could be said.)
- Sign the on-line petition opposing this bill at: www.scenic.org/verizon.
- Pass this on to others and get as many as possible to join this effort.

There are many reasons to oppose this legislation. Here are just a few:

- Consistent Policy for All, No Special Treatment The District needs a reasonable, comprehensive, citywide policy for billboards. We do not need "special exceptions" or special treatment for a select few.
- Washington is not Times Square Our billboard policy must reflect the city's unique status and character and properly balance our historic and contemporary elements. It needs to be addressed by all the stakeholders, not established unilaterally by the Verizon Center.

- Who Benefits/Who Loses The primary beneficiaries of the proposed legislation are the Verizon Center where the advertising revenue will go and the advertisers... and the city may get some new tax revenue. Everyone else loses! This will not bring any additional people or dollars to the city. Impacted commercial and residential property values will likely decline as the pool of interested tenants will definitely decrease resulting in reduced property taxes collected by the city. There is absolutely nothing in this bill that benefits the community.
- Consistent with previous agreements When the Center was approved in 1995 there were conditions and agreements that need to be enforced and honored including the role of NCPC, HPRB, and DC's Office of Planning.
- Safety Concerns with these types of signs have been raised by the Federal Highway Administration, DDOT, OP, and others. All signs should be consistent with these concerns and statutory guidelines.
- No proper review is provided. Signs of any size and in any locations (now and in the future) only need a DCRA permit and DCRA has a documented track record in not always properly handling such reviews and issuing of permits. A proper process must be followed to establish a sane and sensible citywide policy and see it enforced.

Contact information for DC's elected officials:

Members of the Committee on Public Services and Consumer Affairs

Yvette Alexander, Committee Chair
 (202) 724-8068
 yalexander@dccouncil.us

Mary Cheh
 (202) 724-8062
 mcheh@dccouncil.us

Muriel Bowser
 (202) 724-8052
 mbowser@dccouncil.us

Jim Graham
 (202) 724-8181
 jgraham@dccouncil.us

Phil Mendelson
 (202) 724-8064
 pmendelson@dccouncil.us

Contact Other Members of the DC Council

Marion Barry
(202) 724-8045
mbarry@dccouncil.us

Kwame Brown
(202) 724-8032
kbrown@dccouncil.us

Michael Brown
(202) 724-8105
mbrown@dccouncil.us
David Catania
(202) 724-7772
dcatania@dccouncil.us

Jack Evans
(202) 724-8058
jevans@dccouncil.us

Vincent Orange
(202) 724-8174
vorange@dccouncil.us

Tommy Wells
(202) 724-8072
twells@dccouncil.us

Your message to the Council can be as short as:

“I oppose the Verizon Center Graphics and Entertainment Act of 2011(B-19-0517) and urge you to oppose it, too. We need a sensible and sane citywide policy for billboards.”