



**RAMW**

Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington

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PUBLIC HEARING

BEFORE THE

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

TESTIMONY OF:

**LYNNE BREAUX**  
**PRESIDENT**  
**RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON, D.C.**

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**Lynne Breaux, President**  
**Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington**

Good evening Councilmember Schwartz, members and staff of the Committee on Public Works and The Environment.

My name is Lynne Breaux and I serve as President of the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington (RAMW). I am a resident of Ward 6 in the District of Columbia. I am honored to be nominated to serve on the District of Columbia Taxicab Commission.

Restaurants, hotels, tourism, transportation and their resulting revenue are intertwined. It is imperative that the District of Columbia maintain efficient modes of transportation for our residents and our visiting tourists and business travelers.

As a long time, car-less resident of Capital Hill, I partake extensively of our Metro system and taxies. Most of the taxicab drivers I encounter are courteous and polite, hardworking and responsible. I respect their work ethic

and appreciate what they do for a living, but the disparity between some of the cars and some of the drivers cries out for regulation and increased oversight. I have often been refused service to Southeast.

And this from a RAMW member on his British daughter-in-law's recent DC taxi experiences, who was here to make a presentation at a World

Bank conference:

- “Four times in two days she was refused rides – she was around the Mall area and alone and I guess obviously a tourist.
- Answers were like “I’m not going that way” and ultimately “no.”
- In a cab to Georgetown she was let out on the edge by a driver who didn’t want to drive into the heart of Georgetown traffic – she knew where she wanted to go (having been there the day before with her colleagues.)”

Is this what visitors find every day in our city? And that’s not even dealing with the other mystery of DC cabs – the zone system rather than meters.

From *The New York Times Magazine* March 7, 2004 Special Travel Edition, “Washington: Some of my Favorite Things,” by Claire Messud, writes about DC’s taxicabs with an out-of-towners perspective, “...the supremely illogical zone system, which, instead of using meters, divides the city into

payment sectors designed to make the politicians' commute cheap; the disconcerting oddity of multiple customers with multiple destinations, crammed into a single cab; and the eccentricity of the drivers, whose knowledge of the city may be tenuous at best, but whose interest in global politics is often passionate and voluble.”

Nominating new members to the Taxicab commission is good first step in the right direction in the effort to fix the existing problems within the taxicab industry. Taxicab reformation is indeed integral to continuing DC resurgence as a vibrant tourist destination with tourists and residents enjoying our exciting restaurants and nightlife, all the while contributing to the city's revenue.

The need for change is not just about meters, it is about a needed overhaul of the regulations addressing crucial taxicab issues creating uniformity and conformity of the taxicab fleet and trained city-knowledgeable taxicab drivers. And to focus solely on the meter/no-meter argument is to lose sight of the overall taxicab industry improvements necessary to properly serve DC's citizens and visitors. However, there is no question that the zone system is confusing, convoluted and causes great chagrin with the tourists

and even longtime residents who are unsure that they are being charged correctly.

As stated, restaurant patrons, residents as well as tourists, are often taxi patrons. It is imperative that for DC to remain and grow as a tourist destination, the vehicle-for-hire industry must be improved. The market for the traveler's dollar is tighter than ever. The meter system and other regulations and oversight work in all major cities, and there is no reason that it would not work here. The Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington respects our fellow hospitality employees in the taxicab industry and strongly supports efforts to improve the taxicab system and thereby increasing the welcoming hospitality we must accord to our visitors and our residents.

Thank you for considering my nomination to the Taxicab Commission.