



District of Columbia Government
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A
Box 75115
Washington, DC 20013



March 13, 2007

Phil Mendelson, Councilmember
Chair, Committee on the Public Safety and Judiciary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 402
Washington, DC 20004

Councilmember Mendelson:

At our regularly scheduled meeting on March 8, 2007, with a quorum present, we voted unanimously to request that your committee assist with reforming the process of "papering" cases that currently is required in the District of Columbia. Papering, the process by which officers must appear in person to present charges to the prosecutor before pursuing a case, has been cited in the past as a substantial cost to the taxpayers.

The exact amount of time that our Metropolitan Police Department Officers spend "papering" remains unknown. In September of 2006, our Commission received the total amount of court compensation time used by officers in 2005. For that year, 5,094 officers spent 331,863 hours on court compensation time. That translates into an annual requirement of 160 officers spending 40 hours a week to participate in the current papering process.

In the District, not only must officers present the charges to prosecutors in person, this must be done the next day that the court is open for business, even if the officer's shift ended at 3:00 am that morning or if the officer is off the next day. This antiquated method is not used by any other local jurisdiction.

Officers and government attorneys are losing valuable time during the meetings after each arrest. Solutions might include videophones in computers, night court, telephones, anything that will allow the officer to be on patrol throughout his shift on a regular basis versus in the courthouse. At minimum pilot projects should be implemented with third party monitoring to provide assessments on the effectiveness of reducing time spent on papering.

Even if the changes provide a 30% reduction in time spent on papering, that would return the equivalent of 48 existing, trained officers back to the street on an annual basis. We look forward to working with the committee on solutions that will decrease the amount of time spent on papering so that officers can spend more time on the combating crime. If our Commission can be of any service on this matter, please contact Commissioner Stephanie Nixon at (202) 396-7234 or by e-mail smnixon6a@prodigv.net.

On behalf of the Commission,

Joseph Fengler
Chair, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6A

CC: Tommy Wells, Councilmember Ward 6
Cathy Lanier, Chief MPD
Jeffrey Taylor, U.S. Attorney's Office
Lisa Marie Singer, Directors Office of the Attorney General