

PRESS RELEASE

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DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice Statement Regarding President Donald J. Trump's March 27, 2025 Executive Order on "Making the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful"

For more than thirty one years, DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice has strived to improve our Nation's Capital for everyone who calls the District and its surrounding areas home. We have always worked to make the "DMV" the best it can be. Given this tradition, DC Appleseed welcomes the portions of President Donald J. Trump's March 27, 2025 Executive Order on "Making the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful" which would restore or maintain federally owned public land throughout DC that have been long been neglected and inadequately funded. We strongly condemn, however, those portions of the same executive order targeting DC's vibrant immigrant community, increasing the number of firearms in the city, and forming a criminal justice task force without requiring local representation. These initiatives will not make the District safer and may undercut existing efforts to implement community-based solutions to reducing crime.

DC Appleseed shares the Trump Administration's goal of beautifying federal lands within the District. Currently, the National Park Service (NPS) controls over 350 tracts of land in the District totaling 6,500 acres, or nearly 90% of the public park system. [1] Inadequate resources are a problem throughout NPS-owned parks in DC, with the Department of the Interior estimating that NPS had \$1,639,231,000 in deferred maintenance and repairs across the city as of February 2025.[2] We hope this executive order ushers in an era of improved funding for NPS properties in DC, including those parks which predominantly serve local residents. Currently, local "friends" groups bolster operations and fundraising for NPS parks throughout the city, but these non-profit entities would benefit from the Administration's leadership to fully address the legacy of disinvestment and neglect.

We also long have worked to advance the safety and well-being of all residents here: Year to date, the District saw 27% fewer violent crimes than in the same period of 2024.[3] While DC Appleseed shares President Trump's goal of ensuring public safety in the District, we strongly oppose the tactics outlined in the March 27th executive order. Given DC's unique status, the District's criminal justice system includes both District and federal agencies, so we need and welcome increased cooperation and collaboration from federal entities. However, as described in the order, the Administration's "D.C. Safe and Beautiful Task Force" does not require participation by or coordination with DC's Mayor, our Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, our Attorney General, or any other specific District public safety official, beyond the Metropolitan Police Department. Just as DC cannot comprehensively address public safety without the support of the federal government, we do not believe the federal government can be successful through initiatives that fail to involve District partners.

Additionally, methods outlined in any executive order should reflect the priorities or values of the local population. They should advance the interests of all members of our community. The executive order, however, does not seek or reflect input from those who call DC home and help make it a destination that millions choose to visit every year. Immigrants comprise 14% of the District's population. Undocumented immigrants make up a much smaller group, with Pew Research estimating they comprise 23% of all immigrants in the city or approximately 25,000 total residents.[4] DC's voters and elected officials have repeatedly affirmed their strong support for immigrant communities, who help make DC the vibrant place it is. We note that policies targeting immigrants could make our city less safe, by making immigrants far less likely to report crimes, cooperate with law enforcement, or seek help when they are victims if they fear that a court appearance, arrest, or other interaction with the police will result in them or their family being turned over to immigration authorities.

Similarly, as the facts show, increasing the number of concealed carry permits for firearms will not make DC safer. As of 2024, DC has 11,460 active concealed carry permits.[5] This number increased from just 123 permits in 2017, when the Supreme Court struck down a DC law requiring permit applicants to show a "good reason" to carry a firearm outside the home.[6] Notably, the increase in concealed carry permits has not correlated with a decrease in homicides. In 2017, DC had just 116 homicides versus 187 in 2024.[7] In fact, DC experienced more homicides each year since the criteria for concealed firearm permits was expanded, which tracks with federal data suggesting that the implementation of concealed carry permits results in more firearms deaths. This reality significantly undercuts any argument that more firearms will make the city safer.

Recent research suggests that the federal government can play an important role in improving public safety in communities through targeted investments in public health, economic opportunity and housing security, education, and improvements to the built environment and community spaces.[8] However, we note that Congress has taken steps within the past month which would significantly reduce funding for public safety, including funding for the Metropolitan Police Department and education. On March 11th, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1968, the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act for 2025. This continuing resolution would require DC to revert to its Fiscal Year 2024 budget six months into Fiscal Year 2025, necessitating draconian cuts to schools, public services, and policing. No jurisdiction could sustain such cuts, which could amount to \$1.1 billion, without threatening public safety and well being. While the Senate passed standalone legislation on March 13th that would address these issues, the House has thus far refused to pass a similar fix. We thank President Trump for his statements encouraging the House of Representatives to move the Senate-passed bill to the floor immediately for a vote.

We urge President Trump to reconsider heavy-handed tactics not supported by those who call this area home like increasing concealed carry permits, aggressive immigration enforcement, and displacing unhoused people from encampment, all of which have been linked to increased crime rates. Public safety requires public trust. Tactics like those in the recent executive order erode public trust by placing communities in fear and by excluding DC locally-elected officials from decision making and DC citizens from input into the laws that govern them. We call on the federal government to instead work with the District's elected officials to craft a comprehensive plan for public safety and beautification supported by the city's residents.

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- [8] Thea Sebastian, et. al. "A new community safety blueprint: How the federal government can address violence and harm through a public health approach." Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-new-community-safety-blueprint-how-the-federal-government-can-address-violence-and-harm-through-a-public-health-approach/>

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For over 31 years, through litigation, teamwork, and advocacy, DC Appleseed has helped make the District of Columbia a better place to live and work. Throughout our history, we have taken on some of the District's toughest problems, developed proposed solutions to those problems, and then worked to get our proposed solutions adopted and implemented. All of our projects emphasize three key values: democratic participation, economic mobility, and racial equity.

We are independent, non-partisan, and objective. We do not come to any issue with an agenda or predetermined viewpoint and we take a position on an issue only after thoroughly researching it from all sides – with this approach, we meet our goal of finding the best possible solutions for all who live and work in the District.