

**Testimony on**  
**Bill 16-666, “ Litter Control Administration Amendment Act of 2006”**  
by Kathy Chamberlain, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Hillcrest Community Civic Association  
June 28, 2006

Councilmember Brown, thank you for introducing Bill 16-666 “Litter Control Administration Amendment Act of 2006”, and Councilmember Graham, thank you for your Co-sponsorship. I hope other councilmembers will support this very important bill.

My name is Kathy Chamberlain, Vice President of the Hillcrest Community Civic Association, former ANC commissioner, and long-time anti-litter advocate and neighborhood de-litterer.

It is disgraceful that the Nation’s Capital effectively has no anti-litter laws. The laws on the books are so rarely enforced as to be non-existent. Every day, DC residents, visitors, and our neighbors in Virginia and Maryland drive and walk through our city dropping hundreds of pounds of litter, and with no consequence. The cleanliness of our city should be an example to the rest of the country and the world, but the reality is that we live in a city where littering is permitted. At minimum, and as a first step, MPD police should ticket drivers of cars from which litter is ejected, similar to any other traffic violation but perhaps without the points, and the fines should be in line with those of other jurisdictions.

In preparing this testimony I did a brief search of the Internet for examples of litter laws in other jurisdictions, and found many. In Ohio, littering from a motor vehicle can result in a fine of \$100 to the driver. Leaving any trash or discarded items on any public or private land or waterway is a third-degree misdemeanor also subject to fine. Pennsylvania has a similar law, with a fine of \$300. For South Carolina, it’s \$200-\$300 plus community service picking up litter. These are just a few of many examples I found, and in all cases, the police are the issuers of the fines. Why the District of Columbia cannot find ways to impose penalties for littering when other jurisdictions seem to have no problem is a great mystery to me.

We remark on how dirty the Anacostia River is. Volunteers congratulate themselves when they remove tons of trash during river cleanups. The majority of that trash comes from our streets through storm drains. Walk along some of the busy intersections within a few blocks of the Anacostia River, such as Pennsylvania Ave SE and see the storm drains clogged with litter. After a heavy rain it magically disappears—into the Anacostia. The stickers applied a few years ago to storm drains, saying “No Dumping. Drains into your river.” appear to have had no effect.

Litter is not only unsightly, it is expensive. The DC Water and Sewer Authority traps trash in the Anacostia River then runs “skimmer boats” daily to haul it ashore (see photo). Someone is paying for this, and it is most certainly us, the WASA customers. We ask for more street cleaning and litter pickup on our busiest streets, and we applaud DPW when they put more resources into the job of cleaning our city. Again, we the citizens are paying more and more for picking up after the litterers.

I and many of my neighbors are tired of hearing that it’s all about education, that if we educate people not to litter, our problem is solved. Education alone is not the answer. For the past 10 years I have been walking the streets in and around my neighborhood, picking up trash, most of that time with my neighbor Vincent Spaulding. We can attest that there is more trash on the streets now than there was 10 years ago. Without effective laws, 10 years from now there will be more trash on our streets than today. While efforts at educating are laudable, we must also have effective enforcement. I strongly urge this Council to re-direct some of the money spent on picking up after people to implementation and enforcement of litter laws by our police.

Police officers should be given not only the tools, but also the incentive, for anti-litter enforcement. For this to happen, our chief of police needs to buy into the importance of anti-litter enforcement and find ways to encourage officers to take it seriously. In other words, a stronger litter law, if passed, should not become just another feel-good rarely-enforced law.

I encourage councilmembers to join other jurisdictions in the fight against litter by passing this important bill.