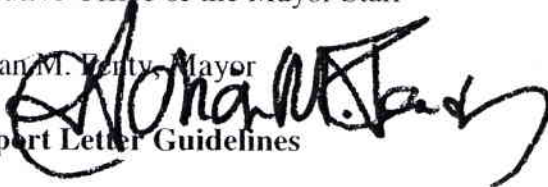


GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUANCE SYSTEM

Mayor's Memorandum 2007-3
June 5, 2007

TO: Executive Office of the Mayor Staff
ORIGINATOR: Adrian M. Fenty, Mayor
SUBJECT: Support Letter Guidelines



The following guidelines are hereby issued. These guidelines shall apply to all employees of the Executive Office of the Mayor (EOM).

I. INTRODUCTION

Private citizens and private entities occasionally ask the Mayor to sign pre-drafted—or to draft from scratch—letters purporting to support or endorse private ventures, applications for financial and other assistance, and to aid endeavors of all kinds. The guidelines herein are designed to assist the Mayor's staff in screening, drafting, editing, and approving appropriate support letters intended for the Mayor's signature.

Questions regarding the legal sufficiency or ethical appropriateness of any proposed support letter should be directed to the Mayor's General Counsel's Office (202-727-1597) or the District's Ethics Counselor (202-727-3400).

II. GENERAL GUIDANCE

Letters of support to be signed by the Mayor:

- * **Shall be addressed to the party seeking the letter and not to a party from whom the requestor is seeking any benefit.** For example, when Ms. Smith, the president of the hypothetical District-based Help the Homeless Committee, seeks a letter supporting her grant application she is about to submit to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Mayor's letter should be addressed to Ms. Smith at the Help the Homeless Committee and not to anyone at HUD.

- * **Shall not include any language related to fundraising, including solicitations or support for solicitations.** A letter may not acknowledge an individual's or organization's fundraising efforts or offer support for such efforts. Where it may be appropriate to wish a party success in fulfilling the stated mission of a program, it would not be appropriate, for example, to wish a party success in reaching a stated dollar goal in a fundraising campaign or to indicate support of a party's efforts to get others to donate funds. Letters dealing with grant applications should speak only to the stated goals of the program or the organization and not give any endorsement of the grant application itself.
- * **Shall not include any endorsement of a commercial product.** There should be no personal testimonial statements indicating that the Mayor uses any particular product or partakes personally in any non-government activity. For example, a request for a letter from a beverage company stating that the Mayor enjoys drinking their product would be inappropriate.
- * **Shall not be written on behalf of a party to litigation or an administrative judicial matter.** A letter supporting a mother's legal motion for increased child support payment pending before D.C. Superior Court would not be proper, for example.
- * **Shall not be written on behalf of a commercial or for-profit enterprise.** Under limited circumstances a letter deemed by the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development to be in the interest of the District of Columbia may be considered. In such situations, the letter must be approved by both the General Counsel to the Mayor and the District Ethics Counselor. Such approval shall be considered on an expedited basis.
- * **Shall contain no assertion of facts and make no representations as to the truth of statements provided by the requestor.** Phrases such as, "I know," should be avoided, and in their place phrases like "I believe," "I understand," and "I am told," should be used.
- * **Shall not warrant the quality of any performance, service, or program, or attest to anyone's character.** Phrases such as, "Mr. Jones is a good man," and "the Help the Homeless Committee's End Homelessness Now Program is effective and will work," for example, are not appropriate.

III. PROCESS

This process is to be completed within 48 hours, unless exigent circumstances require a shorter timeframe.

1. Letters seeking support from the Mayor shall first be directed to the Executive Assistant to the Mayor in the EOM for initial screening and general compliance with the standards set forth in these guidelines. If general compliance is not found, the reason for non-compliance shall be noted on the letter.

2. If not approved for initial general compliance, a letter seeking support from the Mayor shall be directed to the Mayor's Correspondence Unit (MCU) for a reply to the requestor stating that the Mayor is not in a position to write a letter supporting his or her project or activity due to the reason noted by the Executive Assistant to the Mayor on the letter.
3. If approved for initial general compliance, a letter seeking support shall be directed to MCU to be drafted and/or edited in compliance with these guidelines.
4. A letter seeking the support of the Mayor, once drafted, shall be given to the General Counsel to the Mayor, and, if necessary in the opinion of the General Counsel, to the District Ethics Counselor, for approval.
5. If not approved by the General Counsel, and, when needed, the Ethics Counselor, a letter will be returned to the MCU either with comments or edits or with, pursuant to Paragraph 2 above, directions for a return letter to the requestor.
6. Following legal approval, the letter shall be given to the Chief of Staff of the EOM for final approval.
7. If not given final approval by the Chief of Staff, the letter shall be handled pursuant to Paragraph 2 above.
8. If given final approval by the Chief of Staff, the letter shall be finalized, signed, and sent.

Except with the advance written approval of the General Counsel, no electronic copy of the Mayor's signature shall be sent to a private citizen, or District or non-government entity for them to add to a letter of support.

Ceremonial letters and proclamations requested through the Office of the Secretary of the District of Columbia shall comply with the General Guidance in Part II of this memorandum but shall not be required to comply with the Process described in Part III of this memorandum.