Presidential limos for DC voting rights

By Steve Thorngate
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Lots of great moments from the Inauguration. Some of them serious, like Obama's full-throated support for LGBT rights. (Though contrary to some reports, it wasn't the first time he used the Seneca Falls/Selma/Stonewall line.) Some of them fun, like watching the First Family behave like a regular, happy, un-self-conscious family. (It's not likely you missed this, but just in case: Malia Obama's amazing photobomb.)

My personal favorite: the president's decision to start using DC's "Taxation Without Representation" license plates on his limo.

The issue of DC voting rights doesn't tend to get a lot of attention outside the Beltway, which of course is one reason that members of Congress feel free to blow it off *inside* the Beltway. But it's really quite astonishing: 600,000+ American taxpayers don't have congressional representation. District residents have had a voice in presidential elections since 1961 and a nonvoting delegate in the House of Representatives since a decade later, but still no bona fide representation in the House—and nothing at all in the Senate. This despite the fact that DC has a larger population than Vermont or Wyoming.

Hence the slogan. Some Tea Partiers around the country have used the American Revolution-era line as well, presumably meaning that they pay their taxes but their representatives—who have other constituents, too—don't do what they want them to. This is pretty offensive to DC residents, who as far as legislative power is concerned are in basically the same situation that the colonists were in the 18th century.

The disenfranchisement of DC's people was wrong a few years ago, when most of those people were African-American, and it's still wrong now, when the District is growing wealthier and trendier and whiter by the minute. Good for the president for

making a statement that may actually register with Americans not personally affected by this injustice—Americans who actually have members of Congress they can call to demand change.