undisturbed. Our challenge as leaders of a growing population has been to assure that the most sensitive of these areas are protected from development so that future generations—our kids and their kids—have the same ability that we have had to see the magnificent vistas and enjoy the benefits of a clean environment. The Wild Olympics Wilderness & Wild and Scenic River Act of 2012 represents an important incremental step in assuring the protection of additional roadless areas in Washington, and I will be working with my colleagues on the Natural Resources Committee to urge timely consideration of this legislation.

JUDY DENISON

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 21, 2012

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and applaud my friend and talented singer Judy Denison for receiving the Living Landmark Award.

The Living Landmark Award is presented by the Golden Landmarks Association, a nonprofit organization whose focus is to preserve historic places and educate people about the wonderful history the City of Golden has to offer.

Judy Denison relocated to Golden in 1988 because she loves the peaceful nature of Golden and the small town feel. She was the co-founder of Save the Mesas and an organizer for the Mesa Music Festival. Judy's involvement in Citizens Involved in Northwest Quadrant (CINQ) lead to the establishment of the Golden Newsletter, which reaches out to nearly 1,000 Golden citizens each week. The newsletter discusses environmental and cultural news and its mission is to preserve the clean mountain air and the ambiance of Golden.

Judy's accomplishments are many. After a medical mission to Belize, Judy set up the Belize Education Project to send teachers to Belize and provide books and scholarships to underprivileged students. She is a member of the Golden Rotary Club and meets with teenage girls in the community to discuss life and ethics. Furthering her youth outreach, Judy organized the Golden Community Choirs, which is now in its twelfth season.

Judy Denison is a true ''Golden'' citizen in every sense of the word. She has been a champion in the community and I am honored to congratulate her on this well deserved recognition by the Golden Landmarks Association. Thank you for making our community a proud place for all Coloradans.

DOMESTIC ENERGY AND JOBS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 20, 2012

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4480) to provide for the development of a plan to increase oil and gas exploration, development, and production under oil and gas leases of Federal lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of the Interior, and the Secretary of Defense in response to a drawdown of petroleum reserves from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve:

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of H.R. 4480, the Domestic Energy and Jobs Act. This important legislation brings together multiple domestic energy bills that seek to help jumpstart our economy, spur job creation, and reduce energy costs on families and small businesses.

Given our slow economic recovery and high unemployment, we ought to do everything within our powers to ease the burdens facing Americans. Instead, this Administration continues to push policies that stifle job creation and increase uncertainty. The failed policies of the last three and a half years have only made a bad situation worse. Why would we continue to go down a path that makes it harder and harder for American companies to compete in a competitive global market? Energy costs are a major factor for companies when they are considering building a new facility or moving operations overseas. Let's make that decision easy for them and work to keep energy costs low so a U.S. presence is more attractive.

Today, we have an opportunity to pass legislation that will help stimulate the economy, lower the costs on small businesses and put a few extra dollars in the pockets of hard working Americans. For too long, we have ignored the abundant resources here at home, leaving us at the mercy of OPEC and other unstable countries throughout the world. I found it amusing that earlier this year when gas prices rose to record levels, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, these are the same individuals who are vehemently opposed to opening up production of oil and gas here in the U.S., were encouraging OPEC to increase oil production output. Why would we encourage OPEC to increase production, while doing everything in our power to severely limit production here at home?

Additionally, I am pleased that this legislation makes an attempt to reduce the abuse of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to score short term political points by tying the release of oil to opening up federal lands for oil and gas production. Also, this legislation takes important steps to streamline the permitting process for all energy sources, increase transparency and accountability on EPA regulations, and provide for greater lease certainty.

It is important for everyone to understand that currently only three percent of federal land is leased for oil and gas development. Given the instability in the Middle East, we must make it a priority to explore and develop our own natural resources. This doesn't mean that this has to come at the expense of our environment. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has identified 351 energy projects that have been stalled by ''not in my backyard'' suits, regulatory red tape, and endless challenges from environmentalists. What many may not realize is that almost half of these projects were for renewable energy projects. So this is not just an obstacle the oil and gas industry is facing. I am confident that we can find a way to ensure the protection of our environment while developing energy resources here at home, and this legislation is a step forward to make that possible.

It is time we put Americans back to work, and this legislation will go a long way to encourage economic growth, decrease our nation's dependence on foreign sources of oil, and reduce the costs on hard working Americans. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

RECOGNIZING ILIR ZHERKA

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 21, 2012

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing Ilir Zherka, Executive Director of DC Vote, who has been the outstanding leader of District of Columbia residents in the fight for equal citizenship rights in our country. Ilir will celebrate his tenth anniversary as Executive Director of DC Vote on June 24, 2012. Ilir has built DC Vote in membership and in the use of a wide assortment of sophisticated tactics and approaches. Under Ilir's leadership, DC Vote has sustained itself for 10 years without interruption, thus ensuring the sustainability of a citizen's movement here for the first time in decades. Ilir has been the major tactician of the movement, skillfully using approaches as varied as polling, lobbying, and civil disobedience.

Most recently, Ilir was the architect of unprecedented civil disobedience on the streets in front of the Senate and the White House last year, after Congress reimposed anti-home-rule riders on the D.C. appropriations bill, and after the District government barely avoided being shut down because of a federal budget fight in which the city was not involved. Ilir's own arrest was emblematic of the courageous leadership that he has given the movement.

Ilir's earlier leadership in the fight of D.C. residents for a full vote in the House brought the city the closest to success in its history. Ilir brought a wide variety of approaches to the voting rights struggle with mounting success. His valuable work behind the scenes in establishing contacts to help remove an amendment that tied passage of the D.C. House Voting Rights Act (DCVRA) to the elimination of the city's gun safety laws is not well known. Years of diligent and systematic work brought passage of the DCVRA in the House and Senate, only to be undercut by the dangerous gun amendment. This disappointment after many years of hard work would have caused many to move on. However, on the heels of the setback for voting rights, Ilir immediately turned to leading a new fight for D.C. budget autonomy and building an expanded national coalition to protect the District's home rule from an unprecedented series of attacks.

Ilir's aggressive creativity in building DC Vote has been matched by personal modesty, rare in a leader of a movement. Most who have worked with Ilir have been unaware that he was brought to this country as a child in an immigrant family from Montenegro, fleeing ethnic tension with Albanians. He rose from an underprivileged childhood in the South Bronx to attend college at Cornell University and law school at the University of Virginia. Ilir's work for justice before and during his leadership of DC Vote was chronicled in an April 2012 article in Washingtonian magazine, entitled ''Taking It to the Street.'' I ask for unanimous consent to place the article in the RECORD.

Mr. Speaker, for 10 years, Ilir Zherka has been leading the fight for equal rights for the residents of the District of Columbia, within view of the U.S. Capitol. Ilir has visited the offices of many Members. His leadership has been in the great tradition of citizens who have petitioned for their rights and engaged in citizen action, including time-honored civil disobedience. I ask the House to join me in commending Ilir Zherka for his outstanding leadership of the movement for equal citizenship rights for the more than 600,000 Americans who live in the Nation's capital.

TAKING IT TO THE STREET

(By Ariel Sabar)

The Headquarters of DC Vote have a lived-in feel, with scuffed blue carpets and hallways lined with stacks of cardboard boxes. The walls are a bricolage of candid photos from protests and posters from the group's well-known ad campaigns (I AM DC, I DEMAND THE VOTE). When I first visited last summer, a couple of rumpled dress shirts hung over the backs of chairs in the office bullpen. A staffer apologized, saying they'd been tossed there by interns who had changed into T-shirts before going out to leaflet.

The corner office of DC Vote's executive director, Ilir Zherka, was so tidy by comparison that I asked whether he'd cleaned up for my visit. There was a stand for his leadership awards, a single mounted news article, an impeccably trimmed ficus. Zherka said the slim pile of papers on his desk was a bit thicker than usual: ''I don't like clutter. It prevents me from freeing up my mind to work.''

A diagram tacked to the inside of his door added to the picture of Zherka as the cool tactician bringing discipline to the District's long and messy struggle for full democratic rights. The nation's capital has more residents than Wyoming—but no vote in Congress, which has the power to overrule the District's leaders on local matters.

The hand-drawn diagram, of X's and O's yoked by arcing lines, looked like a page from a coach's playbook. Inside the biggest loop was a list of what Zherka said were ''opponents or problems.'' These included Power of Elites, Ignorance, NRA, Republicans, Blue Dog Dems, Pseudo Strict Constructionists. The list had the gravity of a voting-rights Ten Plagues.

The diagram, Zherka explained, was a postmortem inked after one of the movement's most spectacular defeats. Legislation that DC Vote had spent seven years fighting for—and that had won historic votes in both the House and the Senate—came to an ugly end in the spring of 2010, the victim of a fractured city leadership and of deft politicking by the national gun-rights lobby. The DC Voting Rights Act would have expanded the US House of Representatives by two seats. One would have gone to DC, whose residents are overwhelmingly Democratic, the other to Utah, a Republican-leaning state that had failed by a whisker to win a fourth House seat through the 2000 census.

In trying to regroup, Zherka—a tall 46-year-old man with narrow features, a loping gait, and a salt-and-pepper goatee—had organized a series of meetings to pick through the wreckage. The movement needed to pivot, to find a new way forward. At the front of everyone's mind was the one-word question scrawled in big red letters at the top of the diagram: How?

As Zherka came to see it, the ''inside game''—of lobbying Congress, of quiet meetings with elites—had to give way to something more aggressive. The District had to make Congress and the White House pay a higher price for denying greater self-rule to the 600,000 residents of the nation's capital.

''Part of our strategy is to push this fight to the point where Americans weigh in in large numbers,'' Zherka told me. ''That's the way the civil-rights movement worked, when people from the North called their congressmen and said, 'Stop those dogs, turn off those water hoses.'''

We left Zherka's office and walked to the small break room. Among the photos on the wall was one of Zherka wrapped in a TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION flag and pointing skyward with his right hand. The gesture managed to evoke both the Statue of Liberty and Moses.

Zherka said that the day after Barack Obama won the presidency, he taped the Washington Post's front page to the same wall. It was a totem to the man who was supposed to be the movement's redeemer; the man who had backed the voting-rights bill as a US senator, who ate at Ben's Chili Bowl, who played basketball with then-DC mayor Adrian Fenty and won Fenty's endorsement in the Democratic primary; the man, an African-American, who said he saw this historically black city on the Potomac as something more than a seat of federal power.

That now felt like a long time ago. Last spring, Zherka removed the Election Day front page and replaced it with one more attuned to the times. Its centerpiece was a photograph of current DC mayor Vincent Gray being handcuffed by the Capitol Police on April 11 of last year, a day when 41 people, including Zherka, the mayor, and six DC Council members, were arrested in the movement's largest act of civil disobedience in decades. The arrests made headlines around the world.

The television cameras, the turnout among local leaders, and the location—a tightly policed street near the Capitol—gave the appearance of significant advance planning. But Zherka had put the entire demonstration together in about 48 hours. The catalyst was news that President Obama had agreed to a Republican-sought ban on locally funded abortions in DC in a last-minute deal to avert a federal-government shutdown. ''John, I will give you DC abortion,'' Obama had told GOP House speaker John Boehner, according to a Washington Post article reconstructing the negotiations.

From his iPhone that weekend, Zherka sent an e-mail summoning his staff to a 10 AM conference call. This latest attack on self-governance demanded a response, he said. They would need to e-mail supporters, contact the media, work Facebook and Twitter, and get permits from the Capitol Police. Zherka and his deputies would need to track down Mayor Gray and the council over the weekend and urge them to attend. In less than three hours, an e-mail to supporters announced a 5 PM demonstration that Monday, at Constitution Avenue and Second Street, Northeast.

Zherka's plan was to have speeches and then lead perhaps a half dozen protesters into the street, blocking traffic and refusing police orders to move. Zherka suspected that Obama's concession would inflame DC leaders, particularly those who had worked to elect him. But how many were willing to be thrown into the back of a police van? Zherka had run into Mayor Gray at a social function the night before, but Gray had been noncommittal.

The next day, after the speeches, Zherka was the first to defy Capitol Police and set foot in the busy street. To his relief, Gray was right behind him.

When I caught up with him not long afterward, Zherka told me that the 41 arrests were a ''huge turning point.'' But a year later, the movement's prospects seem anything but clear.

If Eleanor Holmes Norton—DC's nonvoting member of Congress—and a string of the city's mayors have been the public face of the fight for greater self-rule in the District, Zherka is its chief strategist and organizer. He is in many ways the movement's Zelig, a shape-shifter as comfortable testifying before Congress as he is leading chants through a bullhorn.

His own obscurity belies the influence of the nonpartisan advocacy group he turned from a once-flailing nonprofit into a many-tentacled powerhouse. Before its advent, Norton says, she often felt like ''a talking head with nobody, meaning a body of citizens to back her up.''

When he isn't emceeing rallies, Zherka is either on the Hill or at DC Vote, in Dupont Circle, where he morphs into a methodical puzzle-solver. At their Monday meetings, his half dozen staffers turn in reports of their activities over the past week, with a breakdown of successes and failures. Zherka uses the reports as real-time intelligence—a ''dashboard,'' as one of his deputies puts it—to identify trends and new lines of attack.

In the halls of Congress, Zherka has a reputation for relentlessness. When a hard-fought 2007 voting-rights bill fell three votes short in the Senate, Zherka ''was absolutely the first person who said, 'We have to get back on the horse. We have to get moving again. What are we doing? Who are we targeting?'' says Deborah Parkinson, then a senior staffer on the Senate committee with District oversight. ''Just when you're tired and ready to take a break for 24 hours, he was right there saying, 'What are we going to do to make sure we get three votes for next time?'''

I accompanied Zherka one morning to a seminar he was leading for staffers from other nonprofits. The course was based on a how-to advocacy book Zherka is writing. Its chapter titles have the ring of both a battlefield manual and a self-help guide—Recruit the Right Champions; Communicate at All Times in All Directions; You Lose Until You Win.

The seminar was in a guesthouse at the villa-style DC home of Daniel Solomon, a philanthropist who helped found DC Vote. Zherka started with a lesson on issue-framing: why ''marriage equality'' is a better phrase than ''gay marriage,'' why ''climate change'' is more likely to get a politician's ear than ''global warming.''

He gave an example from his own movement: ''When someone says 'statehood,' people will ask, 'Well, where's the building going to be? Who's going to be the governor?' When you frame it as 'DC voting rights,' which is essentially the same thing, people will say, 'Oh, it's what everyone else has.'''

During a break, Zherka and I stepped onto the patio. ''When I was in college,'' he said, ''I took one of those tests that's supposed to tell you what career to go into.'' It was some 150 questions but offered less clarity than he'd hoped. ''I remember the results were actor, politician, professor, and military officer.''

When DC Vote hired Zherka as its executive director a decade ago, it needed—and got—all four.

A group of civic leaders and philanthropists established DC Vote in 1998 to rouse public support for the plaintiffs in Alexander v. Daley. The civil suit grew out of a legal theory that Jamin Raskin—a star professor at American University and now also a Maryland state senator—had laid out in a Harvard law journal. A group of 57 residents, joined by the DC government, argued that their lack of full congressional representation violated what Raskin said were equal-protection and due-process rights to ''one person/one vote without regard to geographic residence.''

DC Vote's founders saw in the suit new hope for a struggle winding back 200 years. The District was founded in 1790 on land ceded by Maryland and Virginia. A year after Congress moved to the new capital in 1800, lawmakers stripped residents of their ability to vote for Congress and President. When Philadelphia had been the capital, the Pennsylvania governor had refused to protect Congress from a mob of angry soldiers. Never again, Congress felt, should the seat of federal power be subject to the whims of local politicians.

Washingtonians raised an outcry They paid federal taxes and fought wars but were denied the very democracy the United States had just fought Great Britain to win. Yet for the next 160 years, little changed.

Over the decades, resistance to self-rule took on more cynical dimensions. For many in Congress, DC was simply too liberal and too black. A history of local corruption didn't help, though whether the District's scandals were any worse than those in Congress or in the states remains a fair question.

It wasn't until 1961, with the 23rd Amendment, that Washingtonians won the right to vote in presidential elections. In 1970, the District was granted a nonvoting delegate in the House. Three years later, Congress let DC residents elect a mayor and 13-member council. Though the so-called Home Rule Act was a giant leap, Congress retained the power to review the city's budget and all acts of the council.

The momentum the District had drawn from the broader civil-rights movement in the 1960s and '70s fizzled amid the violence and corruption of the 1980s and '90s. After then-mayor Marion Barry's arrest in a crack-cocaine sting, public animus toward the city crested. ''The whole idea of making this little pissant city into a state is ludicrous, something like a fly landing on an elephant's rump and contemplating rape,'' the Philadelphia Inquirer's David Boldt wrote in a 1993 editorial.

By October 2000, Anthony Williams—first as DC's chief financial officer, then as mayor—had shored up the District's finances and made friends in Congress. But the civil suit hit a wall. The Supreme Court upheld a lower-court ruling that under the Constitution only ''the People of the several States'' could choose members of Congress, and DC was not a state. The lower court had recognized the ''inequity'' but said only Congress could fix it.

By 2002, DC Vote was adrift and nearly bankrupt. Yet Daniel Solomon and another founder, Joe Sternlieb, came to see the legal defeat as an argument for the group's revival. As they looked back at the history of the struggle, they noticed a lack of continuity. Leaders came and went; passions burned and cooled.

''There were these episodic moments of great interest but nothing continuing, nothing being built,'' Solomon—whose grandfather cofounded the Giant Food supermarket chain—told me. ''As a philanthropist, I saw—we all saw—the importance of building a structure that could keep pushing the issue forward, even and especially in the lean times.''

Board members recognized that DC Vote's survival—and perhaps the movement's—depended on its next choice of leader.

Ilir Zherka was born in 1965 in Montenegro, then part of socialist Yugoslavia. His grandparents were farmers who had fought against the Italian and German occupation of Albania during World War II. Disease and the ravages of war claimed the lives of all but one of their seven children—Zherka's father, Ahmet.

After the war, Zherka's grandfather clashed with Albania's new Communist leaders and fled with the family to Montenegro. (Zherka's parents are Muslim, though Zherka now goes with his family to a Unitarian congregation.) In their small town, Ahmet, charismatic and handsome, earned a reputation as an agitator against police harassment of Albanians. ''My dad was very brash, very nationalistic, very unafraid,'' Zherka says.

But after taking part in an ethnic brawl one day, Ahmet feared for his family. They borrowed money from neighbors and landed in New York in May 1968, when Zherka was 2½.

Eleven people—Zherka and his six siblings, their parents and grandparents—squeezed into a three-bedroom apartment in the South Bronx. His father worked as a janitor and elevator operator by day; his mother cleaned offices at night. Zherka remembers feeling humiliated when his mother paid for groceries with food stamps.

When Marshal Tito or some other Yugoslav official visited the United Nations, Ahmet hauled his children there in his Pinto station wagon and helped lead hundreds of fellow Albanian-Americans in protest. ''We, the kids, would march in circles and would be holding signs and shouting out chants,'' Zherka says.

By the time Zherka was a teenager, in the late 1970s, the South Bronx was a wasteland of poverty, racial tension, and violence. His older brothers ran in a tough circle, and several dropped out of high school.

For awhile, Zherka stayed out of trouble. He got a black belt in karate by sixth grade and started rap and breakdancing groups. In the schoolyards on Friday and Saturday nights, Zherka—as MC Rockwell or Il Rock—would join the crews who set up turntables and performed for the neighborhood.

When the family moved to a slightly better-off neighborhood in the North Bronx, Zherka fell in with a gang of Albanian teenagers who robbed houses, sold drugs, and rumbled. Zherka had to repeat ninth grade. When he transferred to Christopher Columbus High School, the principal noticed the disparity between his high test scores and his low grades and warned him to get his act together. The message struck at the right time. One of Zherka's friends was imprisoned for burglary; another was found dead in a river, in what neighbors suspected was a homicide.

It was during an 11th-grade government class that he felt a calling for public service. By his senior year, he was a good enough public speaker that teachers picked him to give ''scared straight'' talks to freshmen and to testify against budget cuts before the board of education.

With the help of a state program for underprivileged students, Zherka won a full scholarship to Fordham University. He drew straight A's his freshman year and transferred to Cornell.

The leap from the Bronx's mean streets to the Ivy league necessitated a costume change: ''I went out and bought three sweaters and a bunch of button-down shirts.'' He joined the debate team and was elected president of the Cornell Democrats. He interned in the office of New York senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and graduated from Cornell with distinction and the school's John F. Kennedy Memorial Award for public service.

Back in the Bronx, Zherka's success became a source of pride. Among former classmates, Il Rock had become Political II.

During his second year at the University of Virginia School of Law, he met Linda Kinney, a third-year student from Southern California, who would become his wife. They bought a condo in DC's Cleveland Park in 1994, and Zherka landed a job as a legislative aide to longtime California congressman George Miller, a liberal from San Francisco.

The night before a major hearing, Zherka helped labor activist Charles Kernaghan prepare testimony accusing the manufacturer of a Kathie Lee Gifford clothing line sold at Walmart of forcing underage workers into long shifts at Honduran sweatshops. ''I had no idea it would be one of the sparks that would set off dramatic changes within the garment industry worldwide,'' Zherka says.

Despite a precocious start on the Hill, Zherka's past tugged at him. The 1995 Dayton Accords settling the conflicts between former Yugoslav Republics left unresolved the status of Kosovo, a predominantly Albanian province of Serbia chafing under the brutal rule of Slobodan Milosevic.

Albanians in the United States turned to Washington for help. Joe DioGuardi, a Bronx-born Republican former congressman from New York with a big personality, had founded the Albanian American Civic League in 1989. But DioGuardi was seen as part of the old guard. Zherka felt he could do better. In 1996, while still working for Miller, he raised money from Albanian-American business owners to form a rival organization, the National Albanian American Council.

''It was a huge rift,'' says Avni Mustafaj, who grew up with Zherka in the Bronx and became NAAC's executive director. ''They're looking at Ilir Zherka and me and saying, 'We know your grandfather and father—what are you doing?''

For a few years, Zherka tried to keep an oar in establishment Washington. He was tapped as national director of ethnic outreach for President Clinton's 1996 reelection campaign and left Miller's office for a job as a senior legislative aide to Labor Secretary Alexis Herman.

But by 1998, Zherka's thoughts had again turned homeward. Milosevic had launched a violent campaign that forced hundreds of thousands of Kosovar Albanians from their homes. ''I picked up the Washington Post and read a story about an entire family that had been wiped out, including a toddler whose throat had been slit,'' Zherka says. ''I remember thinking to myself, 'The person who killed this girl had to be holding her.' I remember going home to my wife and saying, 'I can't work, I can't do my job.' So she said, 'You have to go to NAAC.' ''

As the Kosovo crisis deepened, Zherka became the go-to American spokesman not just for Albanian-Americans but also, it seemed, for Albanians in Kosovo. In 1999 and 2000, he testified before the House International Relations Committee, was quoted in the New York Times, and wrote op-eds in the Washington Post, pressing for Western military intervention. As a NATO bombing campaign got under way that March, Zherka sparred with Oliver North and Sean Hannity on TV and warned, on CNN, that ''acts of genocide are being committed in the heart of Europe.''

Zherka led an NAAC delegation to a White House meeting with President Clinton to press, unsuccessfully, for a ground invasion. NATO's bombing campaign ended in June 1999 with Milosevic's capitulation. When Zherka visited the Albanian capital of Tirana, people stopped him in the streets for photos and autographs.

But the long hours and days on the road were taking atoll. His son, Alek, had been born in 1997 and a daughter, Hana, three years later. By 2002, the wars were over and NAAC was shifting into a new phase. Zherka was ready for a job closer to home.

As DC Vote's board sifted through résumés in 2002, it came up with only one strike against Zherka: He lived in Bethesda. (He and Linda had left their Cleveland Park condo for a larger home just over the Maryland line in 1999.) In the end, qualifications trumped residence.

Zherka turned down an offer from a law firm for what he suspected would be a grueling fight. A member of Congress he knew

from his work on Kosovo questioned his sanity ''Man, Ilir, DC Vote?'' Zherka recalls the congressman saying. ''Either you're really smart because you'll have this job for life or you're really stupid because you actually think you can win this.''

I asked Zherka how he responded.

''I said, 'I'm stupid enough to think I can win.' ''

A few months into the job, Zherka went to see Congressman David Bonior, a Democrat from Michigan, which has a large Albanian population. ''Ilir, you've got to give your opponents something they want,'' Bonior said, according to Zherka. ''Your argument can't be 'Do this because it's the right thing.' You actually need to give them something that they want.''

But what, Zherka wondered, did backers of DC voting rights have to trade?

In 2003, Congressman Tom Davis, a Virginia Republican, offered an answer: a GOP seat for Utah. Davis chaired the House committee with District oversight and was popular in his party. In making his case in an interview with radio host Kojo Nnamdi, Davis had used all the right words: ''It's hard to make a straight-faced argument that the capital of the free world shouldn't have a vote in Congress.''

But DC's Eleanor Holmes Norton and other Democrats in Congress were skeptical. Davis had just finished a four-year stint as chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee, charged with electing GOP candidates to Congress. What good-faith reason could he have for offering a heavily Democratic enclave a voting seat in the House? Statehood advocates also lined up in opposition, because the proposal did nothing about DC's lack of representation in the Senate.

Zherka, however, saw in Davis the sort of champion who could rewire the GOP's opposition to DC voting rights. In 2004, Zherka and a group of leaders from DC Vote's coalition told Davis that if he put in actual legislation, they would back him.

I asked Zherka if it was awkward to get behind a proposal then opposed by Norton.

''Absolutely, it was a little awkward,'' Zherka said. ''All of us recognized that Congresswoman Norton's leadership on the issue was significant and it would be hard for us to move too far forward without her support. At the same time, we all concluded within our organization that this compromise was the best opportunity to actually achieve representation.''

A few minutes later, Zherka added, ''I've always been a big fan of the adage that you can't just keep doing the same thing over and over again.''

After arriving at DC Vote, Zherka pleaded the organization's case to Washington foundations and soon quadrupled DC Vote's budget, to $1.7 million. Republicans in Congress had barred the District from using public money to lobby for voting rights. Zherka obtained a pro bono legal opinion arguing that the ban placed no such restrictions on funding for voting-rights education. He gave the opinion to Mayor Anthony Williams, who in 2006 authorized the first of several half-million-dollar grants to DC Vote.

For DC Vote to be effective, Zherka felt, Americans outside DC—Americans who had a vote in Congress—needed to get involved. He and his staff visited national organizations to argue that they, too, had a stake in DC's plight. Common Cause, the National Bar Association, and the United Auto Workers, among a diverse group of others, joined its coalition, lending their moral weight, lobbying muscle, and hundreds of thousands of grassroots members who could be called on to write or phone their representatives on Capitol Hill.

Zherka went after hostile or wavering Congress members in their own districts. When GOP senator John Ensign of Nevada sought to undermine the DC voting-rights act in 2009, DC Vote launched Internet ads on websites in his home state. ''Senator Ensign is focused on DC's affairs . . . and his own—where does Nevada fit in?'' one read, alluding to Ensign's admission of an extramarital liaison with a former staffer.

The group got hundreds of residents to burn copies of their federal income-tax returns in Farragut Square in a ''Bonfire of the 1040s.'' It handed out tea bags labeled End Taxation Without Representation at Glenn Beck's 2010 rally on the Mall and festooned lawns across Capitol Hill with signs reading Congress: Don't Tread on DC! One of its most eye-catching ads depicted two firemen, one in Maryland and one in DC. ''Both will save your life,'' it said. ''Only ONE has a vote in Congress.''

Davis remembers Zherka during negotiations as an understated pragmatist. With DC Vote, he says, ''we finally had a group that wasn't going to be partisan about it. They just wanted to get the job done.''

Davis introduced the DC Fairness in Representation Act in 2004, and DC Vote went to work, writing editorials and mounting public spectacles. As the bill gained traction, Norton and leading Democrats expressed more support.

In April 2007, DC Vote organized the biggest voting-rights demonstrations in a generation. Mayor Adrian Fenty and thousands of residents marched from the Wilson Building to the Capitol. Less than a week later, the bill cleared the House 241 to 177, with 22 Republicans in favor. But in the Senate it came up three votes short.

Heartbroken supporters turned to the 2008 elections. Obama's ascension to the White House and the Democratic takeover of Congress infused the movement with a new optimism. ''I really can't think of a scenario by which we could fail,'' Norton told the Washington Post just after the election.

Privately, though, Zherka warned advocates to take nothing for granted. Davis had retired from the House, which would make it harder to recruit Republicans. And Utah was just a few years from winning a new seat anyway through the 2010 census.

Very early on, Obama's willingness to expend political capital on the issue appeared brittle. A few days before his inauguration, Obama told the Post's editorial board that he backed a House seat for the District. ''But this takes on a partisan flavor,'' he said, ''and, you know, right now I think our legislative agenda's chock-full.'' Unlike President Clinton—and like George W. Bush—Obama declined to adorn the presidential limousine with Taxation Without Representation license plates.

In February 2009, the former Davis bill—now called the DC House Voting Rights Act—made it to the Senate floor, a first for DC voting rights in more than three decades, and passed on a largely party-line vote of 61 to 37.

The euphoria was again short-lived. Senator Ensign had slipped in an amendment eviscerating the city's gun-control laws. Zherka says that in the run-up to the Senate vote, advocates had mistakenly assumed that Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Nevada Democrat, would oppose the gun amendment. But Reid was facing his toughest reelection fight ever. As a centrist from a gun-friendly state, he couldn't afford an unfavorable rating from the National Rifle Association. ''Not only did he vote for it,'' Zherka says, ''but he gave Democrats''—particularly moderates from conservative Midwestern states—''a green light to vote for it, so everyone piled on.'

As the bill moved to the House, the NRA made clear that it was putting everything on the line. To fend off a parliamentary move to bar all amendments to the House bill, the pro-gun lobby took the unusual step of threatening to ''score'' the vote on any such tactic; avote to disallow amendments would count as anti-gun on lawmakers' political scorecards.

Despite months of lobbying, Zherka and Norton couldn't come up with enough votes from conservative Democrats, many facing reelection battles, to tilt the scales.

Congress effectively gave Washingtonians an ultimatum: You can have your vote, but only if you give up your gun laws.

Among voting-rights advocates, the choice touched off a bruising debate. In one camp were purists outraged at the hypocrisy of having to surrender power in order to get it. In the other camp were pragmatists who glimpsed a now-or-never chance. Everyone knew the clock was ticking toward the midterm congressional elections, which were likely to cost Democrats a crippling number of seats.

A gloom fell over the offices of DC Vote. ''Morale was very, very low,'' Zherka says. ''The economy was tanking. A number of our big donors either walked away or reduced their donations. We had to let people go.'' Zherka was also grappling with a string of personal losses. From 2002 to 2009, three of his siblings—all in their forties—died in a cruel streak of sudden illnesses.

For a short while, it looked as if the bill giving DC and Utah House seats might pass. In April 2010, Norton, who had assailed the gun amendment the previous year, said she would grudgingly accept it. House majority leader Steny Hoyer, a Maryland Democrat, vowed to move the measure to the House floor. Zherka threw his organization's weight behind Norton.

But on April16, the New York Times editorialized against any deal that scuttled the District's gun laws, calling it ''extortion.'' The Washington Post's editorial page followed suit two days later. Support on the DC Council was cratering. Mayor Fenty had backed Norton's change of heart, saying the city could undo the gun measure later. But it was an election year, and his chief rival, then-council chairman Vincent Gray, tacked in the other direction; Gray said he wouldn't sacrifice public safety, and the council lined up behind him.

Meanwhile, liberal Democrats in the Senate were threatening a filibuster of any bill with the gun amendment. DC Vote couldn't hold its own coalition together. Two of its partners—the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence and the League of Women Voters—broke with the group over its support for the Norton strategy.

Then Norton reversed herself again. In a press release, she said that after seeing ''egregious changes'' in the House gun language—allowing the open carrying of firearms—she could no longer go forward.

The 180s left DC Vote battered. And yet when the legislation finally died, it was less disappointment than relief that Zherka says washed over him. Whether or not the bill with the gun amendment had passed—which was far from certain—it risked so dividing city officials, advocates, and lawmakers that further progress on voting rights and home rule might well have stalled for years.

In a series of sometimes emotional meetings in the summer and fall of 2010, DC Vote's staff, board, and coalition members sifted through the rubble. Out of that soul-searching came the shift from an ''inside game'' to an ''outside game'': civil disobedience aimed at embarrassing congressional leaders and the President and winning national sympathy.

''One of the lessons we learned from the fight was that we need to increase the intensity of support from our allies,'' Zherka says.

''Whether it's Reid or Obama, when given a choice between the District and their own political fortunes, they'll choose their own political fortunes.''

In February 2011, Zherka and a group of activists stood up at a House subcommittee hearing in protest with red gags in their mouths. A week later, Zherka led a few dozen protesters in a demonstration outside House speaker John Boehner's Capitol Hill apartment. Zherka accused Boehner of hypocrisy for intruding in DC's affairs while simultaneously backing Tea Party calls for small government.

Since the start of DC Vote's Demand Democracy campaign, some 76 people have been arrested—two of them twice.

Zherka believes that for the campaign to succeed, Mayor Gray and other local officials need to take more of a lead. But Gray, council chairman Kwame Brown, and other District officials have been embroiled in scandals that could complicate their case for greater independence.

On The Kojo Nnamdi Show last May, Gray said he saw his arrest as ''reigniting'' the movement but downplayed the likelihood of a reprise. ''What we've got to see,'' Gray said, ''is really a much broader commitment on the part of the 600,000 people who live in this city.''

Critics say Zherica has pursued too narrow a strategy and that his success has sidelined other voting-rights groups. Stand Up! for Democracy in DC, a volunteer group pressing for full statehood, was founded in 1997, a year before DC Vote. Anise Jenkins, its president and cofounder, labeled the Utah compromise a ''single vote'' strategy because it did nothing about Senate representation or statehood.

Mark Plotkin, the Fox 5 political analyst and former WTOP commentator, is a fan of neither Zherka nor Norton. ''Cairo, Syria—people are willing to lay down lives,'' he says. ''And here our response is DC Vote? A tepid, timid, timorous, establishment organization that doesn't want to offend anybody and, worse, is an appendage to Eleanor Holmes Norton.''

When four Occupy DC protesters went on a hunger strike for District voting rights in December, Zherka issued a statement praising their ''courage and conviction'' but didn't explicitly endorse the action.

At recent rallies, I heard young Washingtonians express a willingness to ''shut the city down,'' perhaps by blocking major roadways from Maryland and Virginia.

I asked Zherka whether DC Vote would endorse such tactics. ''Virginia and Maryland people are family, friends, neighbors,'' he told me. ''There's no reason to inconvenience and punish them.''

Protests, Zherka said, ''have to be tightly tied to injustice and the people perpetuating it.'' Hence the demonstrations outside the Capitol and White House, which offer not just the iconography of those buildings but the sight of federal police—not city ones—carting away District residents.

The street protests seem to have chastened some in Congress. GOP threats last year to ban the District's needle-exchange program, undo its gay-marriage law, and permit concealed firearms were all thwarted, sometimes by other Republicans.

In November, Congressman Darrell Issa, the powerful GOP chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, drafted a bill to let the District spend its money without congressional approval, a right local officials have long sought. (DC Vote is opposing the Issa measure for now because a provision would bar locally funded abortions. But Issa has signaled he is open to finding a resolution.)

In February, Obama released a 2013 budget request that promised to ''work with Congress and the Mayor to pass legislation to amend the D.C. Home Rule Act to provide the District with local budget autonomy.''

But first he has to be reelected. ''Right now we have a President who isn't willing to expend a lot of political capital but will sign anything that we get to him,'' Zherka says. If a Republican wins in November, ''all of our calculus will change,'' with public protests playing an even greater role than they do now.

DC has grown whiter in recent years, with census figures last year showing blacks losing their historic majority. If race had been a subtext of congressional opposition to voting rights, I asked Zherka, shouldn't those demographic shifts, however cynically, alter the political math?

Zherka told me that they had not. The District remains a place that lets gay people marry, permits medical marijuana, and funds abortion for poor women. The city's liberal politics is in some ways the movement's most intractable handicap.

''If DC for some reason became more Republican,'' Zherka says, ''absolutely there would be a different perspective'' in Congress.

Last May 11, a month after Mayor Gray was arrested, DC Vote hosted another rally. It was at Upper Senate Park, a leafy trapezoid across from the Capitol.

As supporters gathered by a table piled with T-shirts and bumper stickers, Zherka, in a gray suit and yellow tie, shook hands with the assurance of a seasoned politician. A woman had brought two young boys, and Zherka patted them on the head. ''Ah, look at these protesters,'' he said approvingly. When an aide identified an older man in a blazer and penny loafers as ''our most loyal online donor,'' Zherka unfastened a DC Vote pin from his lapel and pinned it on the donor's.

After the speeches, the Capitol Police arrested eight activists who had blocked a few lanes of traffic and refused to move.

But soon the crowds and police vans were gone. Zherka was eager to get home to Bethesda. His son had a series of exit interviews at Westland Middle School, from which he was graduating. His daughter, a fifth-grader at Westbrook Elementary, was recovering from a stomach bug. He also wanted to catch up with his wife—a lawyer with the Motion Picture Association of America—about a house they were remodeling in Chevy Chase. (They moved in November.)

Just when it seemed everyone had left, a young man in shorts and a soccer shirt pulled up on a ten-speed. ''Are you with this group?'' he asked.

''I'm the director,'' Zherka said.

The man told him he wanted to get involved but had questions: Why did the city's website give the impression that the movement was divided, listing not just DC Vote but two other organizations? If the District's population was half black, why were protesters today mostly white?

After Zherka's long day, I wasn't sure how much patience he'd have with a halfhearted supporter who had missed much of the rally for a soccer game on the Mall. But Zherka gave no air of hurry. The movement was less divided than the website suggested, he said, and many African-Americans have turned out at other rallies.

''Come help us organize and help us get out the word—do we have your info?'' Zherka said, handing him a card as the sun set behind them. ''Shoot me an e-mail. We need a lot of foot soldiers out here.''

MEG VAN NESS

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 21, 2012

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate and applaud Meg Van Ness for receiving the Living Landmarks Award.

The Living Landmark Award is presented by the Golden Landmarks Association, a nonprofit organization which works to preserve historic places and educated people about the wonderful history the Golden area has to offer. Meg has been a champion in preserving and promoting the historical integrity of Golden.

Meg Van Ness has had a passion for archaeology since high school. She attended the University of Missouri and later the University of Northern Arizona where she received her Master's in Archaeology. In 1990, six years after she moved to Golden, Meg was appointed to the Golden Historic Preservation Board and remained on the board for ten years.

In 2000, Meg joined the Golden Planning Commission and worked with the community to keep Golden special. Meg worked for 16 years as an archaeological consultant, another 16 years with the Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and is currently the Regional Historic Preservation Officer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She continues to serve on various outreach programs and committees in Golden.

I am honored to congratulate Meg Van Ness on this well deserved recognition by the Golden Landmarks Association. We all thank her for her advocacy for the Golden community.

HONORING JESSICA THOMPSON

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 21, 2012

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a very astute young woman from the Second Congressional District, Ms. Jessica Thompson. She has been bestowed the distinction of Salutatorian for the Class of 2012 of Charleston High School in Charleston, Mississippi.

Jessica is an extremely hard worker, and is devoted to academics. She has maintained a position on the Superintendent and Principal Lists throughout high school. In addition to honoring her academic responsibilities, Jessica has also remained dedicated to her extracurricular activities. She has served as the captain of the cheerleading squad, a member of the science club, the Student Council Treasurer, a member of the Future Christian Athletes organization, a National Honor Society member, and as an usher at St. Paul C.M.E. Church.

Jessica will be attending the University of Southern Mississippi as a Lucky-Day Scholar this fall, and plans to major in Kinesiotherapy. After obtaining a bachelor degree in Kinesiotherapy, she plans to become a physical therapist. Jessica does not take her education for granted, because she knows that an education is essential to her hopes of fulfilling