

Candidate Statement: Jon Kuhl for U.S. “Shadow” Representative

Moving to DC after just coming out to my family and friends, I looked at my move to Washington as more than just a change in scenery, it was the beginning of a new chapter in my life – a chapter in which I was finally able to live comfortably as I am. I have since been welcomed into the DC LGBT community and have formed some of my closest friendships, something for which I am extremely grateful. Nothing would give me greater pleasure, and make me prouder, than to represent and work on behalf of our community as an elected official.

Since moving to DC, one of my favorite experiences has been serving as a volunteer each year at the National HRC Dinner. I have also been active in the movement to end Don't Ask Don't Tell and to fight for marriage equality. I was in the city council chambers the day the marriage equality bill was passed. I'll never forget the knowing looks Council Members Catania and Graham exchanged with me and the other activists in the room. The sense of achievement was palpable.

Marriage equality prompted my interest in the “Shadow” Representative position. Watching Senator Robert Bennett (R-UT) attempt to add an amendment to the healthcare reconciliation bill to stop same-sex marriages in our city, I became infuriated. I had always known that DC lacked a vote in Congress, but to see our laws subject to the whims of a conservative senator from halfway across the country, the limits of our autonomy really hit home.

Our city needs a strong advocate to fight for representation in Congress, increased home rule, and statehood, and I believe I am the leader for this task. In my current work, I manage the congressional affairs efforts for the Congressional Youth Leadership Council, an organization that brings thousands of youth annually to Washington to see our government in action. Drawing upon this experience and others, I plan to increase our presence on the Hill and engage young people in a way they have yet to be utilized. I also plan to reach out to other cities throughout the country, building relationships in order to create a coalition of cities. Our city faces many of the same issues other urban areas face, making it a win-win situation for our city to have voting representation in Congress.

I'm running for this office because I'm passionate about our city's right to voting representation in Congress. We fought the Revolutionary War on the issue of taxation without representation, and it's time this fundamental principle became a reality for DC. And as a member of the DC LGBT community, no one will work harder than me on the issues we care about, because these issues are my issues too.