



## the district BEAT



BY MARK SEGRAVES

### Metro Crash Sheds Light On Fenty's Style

For nearly an hour and a half after the tragic Metro crash that claimed nine lives, there was a media blackout. Reporters found it impossible to get any information from any of the District agencies involved. The reason was an order from Mayor Fenty's office that all press inquiries were to be funneled through his office.

That move didn't sit well with reporters or some of the agencies involved. A spokesperson for Metro, Candace Smith, told the Washington Post, "The spirit of cooperation is not what we would like it to be."

Mike DeBonis who writes the Loose Lips column for Washington City Paper put it this way,

"WHAT IS ABSOLUTELY NOT COOL is silencing people with good information in the time when good information is needed."

It's not the first time Fenty has tried to control the flow of information during a breaking news event. After the shooting at the Holocaust Museum, Fenty took the lead with reporters and dictated who would speak and when. At the press briefing the morning after the shooting, surrounded by dozens of reporters and cameras from around the world, Fenty cut off the questions from reporters 10 minutes into the press conference. Maybe it was because none of the questions were directed at him.

Fenty has been systematically beefing up his own communications staff while cutting the staff of other agencies. Most recently longtime District spokesperson and political gadfly Bill Rice was fired. According to one of the few remaining free-standing spokespeople in the District government, Sean Madigan who works outside of Fenty's bullpen, "Rice's position was eliminated as part of budget cuts at the Office of Property Management."

School Chancellor Michelle Rhee's communication staff may have been too good at their job. Just months after Rhee landed on the cover of Time magazine, her top spokesperson was re-deployed to the Department of Health.

Reporters are finding that, more often than not, any question about the D.C. Government must go through the Mayor's office. That may not be a bad thing if the intent is to streamline the process and ensure the steady flow of reliable information, but if the intent is to slow or halt the flow of information, then that's another story. Stay tuned.

### Speed Hump Crazy

Since Adrian Fenty became mayor in 2007, the number of speed bumps in the nation's capital has jumped from 157 to 691. The Fenty administration has authorized twice as many speed bumps in two-and-a-half years as the Williams administration authorized in five.

From 2001 to 2005, the District's Department of Transportation installed approximately 50 speed bumps. Since 2007, DDOT has installed 534 of the traffic calming devices. There are no plans to slow down the process.

The growing number of speed bumps puts the District on top when it comes to the average number of bumps per mile in the D.C. region. Based on the number of speed bumps and the total miles of local roads, the District averages about one speed hump for every 1.5 miles.

In Montgomery County, drivers encounter a speed bump about once every 2.2 miles. In Fairfax County, it's virtually bump-free with an average of one bump in every 14.5 miles.

Before Fenty was elected, residents who wanted speed humps on their streets had to wade through a cumbersome process that could take months or even a year.

DDOT spokesperson John Lisle says the process "has been streamlined."

In the past, the agency would require a traffic study be completed for every request. Now, residents simply have to get the majority of their neighbors to sign a petition.

Lisle says the reason for the change is to promote pedestrian safety.

"Safety for pedestrians, residents, workers and visitors is always a top priority. The District has long supported speed bumps in neighborhoods as a means to provide traffic calming. With the streamlined process we are now able to fill requests more efficiently."

### Norton Kills Voting Rights... Blames Obama

The District's non-voting delegate to Congress, Eleanor Holmes Norton, says she believes the Obama administration has not done enough to secure a bill that would give voting rights to District residents.

Norton says she reached out to the Obama administration on numerous occasions, hoping to get its support in defeating a gun amendment attached to the legislation by Sen. John Ensign (R-Nev.).

While the Obama administration has not lobbied congressional members on the D.C. voting rights bill, Norton says she hoped the administration would reach out to Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives to get rid of the gun amendment.

"I was disappointed in the administration. They could have been more help," Norton said.

This is the first time a local elected official has criticized the Obama administration.

Last month, Norton announced she was pulling the bill that would give D.C. residents a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives after being unable to reach a compromise on the gun amendment.

The decision means Congress will not vote on the legislation before the summer recess and may not vote on it this year.

"There is not a consensus among leaders in D.C.," House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer told reporters.

Norton says that she did not consult with D.C. Council Chairman Vincent Gray or D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty before making the decision to kill the voting rights bill.

The fact that Fenty and the Council were split over whether or not to accept the gun legislation as a "bitter pill" gave Norton just the cover she needed to kill any hopes of getting voting rights this year without taking the blame. Blaming Obama is just par for the course for Norton who refuses to accept responsibility for the missing a golden opportunity.

Remember, despite what Norton says NOW, when Virginia Republican Congressman Tom Davis introduced the Davis Bill several years ago, Norton OPPOSED IT. Despite her, and the Washington Post's revisionist history, Norton was pushing her own bill that called for D.C. residents to be freed from federal income taxes if they don't get a vote. It wasn't until the Davis Bill gained momentum and was headed to the floor of the House for debate that Norton jumped on the bandwagon.

## I Admit It. I'm A Huge Nils Fan

When Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band played the Verizon Center last month, it was just another city on a world tour for most of the band, but it was a homecoming for E Street guitarist Nils Lofgren.

Lofgren grew up in Bethesda, played the D.C. clubs with his band Grin and still owns a home here in the suburbs.

Lofgren calls Phoenix home now, but his 82-year-old mother still lives here as do his three brothers. Lofgren has had a successful solo career for 40 years, but for the past 25 years he's had to balance his career with Bruce's.

"The E Street Band is a full-time job," says Lofgren.

Lofgren is considered by many to be one of the best rock guitarists alive. While he's spent the past 25 years backing up Bruce, his resume includes Neil Young, Ringo Starr, Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson, Branford Marsalis and Rod Stewart. To name a few.

His latest solo CD, "The Loner," is a compilation of Neil Young songs that Lofgren recorded at his home on piano and acoustic guitar. Lofgren played piano and sang on Young's 1970 "After The Goldrush" album. At the end of the recording session Young gave Lofgren the Martin guitar he had used to write the album. Lofgren used that same guitar to record "The Loner."

"It's a mellow record, the entire thing is live, no production over dubbing."

Lofgren knows he has a strong fan base here in D.C. and he tries to perform here at least once a year. Unfortunately for Nils, fans they are going to have to keep waiting for their next Nils show.

"Usually I do three-night stand at the Birchmere, but they need me to commit, like a year in advance, and I can't do that until this tour is over."

Lofgren admits he's had a career most musicians can only dream of, but that doesn't stop him from dreaming of even bigger things.

"Maybe to have this giant hit record that everybody's sick of because every radio station is playing it too much, that's the dream. But it's not something I'm holding my breath for. It's not a race anymore." ★

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- Residents who meet income eligibility guidelines can receive Economy II Service for \$3.00 a month, plus applicable taxes and surcharges, **including free unlimited local calling.**
- Income qualified Seniors 65 years of age and over pay only \$1.00 per month, plus applicable taxes and surcharges.

**For additional information on how to qualify, please contact The District Department of the Environment/Energy Office on 311.**

### Link-Up America

Link-Up America is for District residents who are eligible for social service assistance. New customers or customers who move to a new address may qualify for a 50 percent reduction in service connection charges.

### Antenna on Your TV? You Need to Read Below

With the digital television (DTV) transition, the United States is moving from analog to digital service for full power over-the-air TV broadcasts. After June 12, 2009, analog-only TVs will require a converter box to receive full-power over-the-air TV broadcasts with an antenna.

Analog-only TVs should also continue to work as before to receive low power, Class A or translator television stations and with cable and satellite TV services, gaming consoles, VCRs, DVD players, and similar products.

Information about obtaining subsidized coupons for the government's converter box program can be obtained at [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) or by calling 1-888-DTV-2009, or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY). More information about the broadcast DTV transition in general is available at [www.DTV.gov](http://www.DTV.gov) or by calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (voice) or 1-888-TELL-FCC (TTY). You may also contact the DTV Transition Coalition at [www.dtvtransition.org](http://www.dtvtransition.org), or Verizon at 1-888-558-3755 (voice) or 888-558-3770 (TTY).