

TESTIMONY
OF
YOLANDA BRANCHE
ACTING DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AUDITOR
PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OCTOBER 25, 2011

CHAIRMAN BROWN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: I am Yolanda Branche, Acting District of Columbia Auditor. I am honored to have the opportunity to meet with you today as you consider my nomination to serve as the District of Columbia Auditor.

I am a native Washingtonian. I attended Bunker Hill Elementary School, Jefferson Junior High School and Coolidge High School. At Coolidge, I met my future husband. After graduating from Tufts University, I returned to Washington to attend law school at George Washington University.

I am committed to improving the lives of District residents. I demonstrated my commitment at the Control Board by working to improve the District's finances and as Executive Director of the Mayor's Task Force on the Future of the District of Columbia Public Library System. As a Senior Analyst in the Office of the D.C. Auditor, I continued my efforts to make a difference in the lives of District residents.

I joined the staff of the Office of the D.C. Auditor three years ago because the work of the Office of the D.C. Auditor significantly improves the lives of District residents by assisting the D.C. Council in performing its oversight, programmatic, and budgetary duties.

The Office of the D.C. Auditor works with agencies to understand the challenges and successes agencies face in delivering programs and to identify issues that prevent programs from functioning as designed by the Council. When agencies fail to perform as expected, the Auditor should advise the Council of the cause of problems, provide examples of best practices, and offer recommendations to address the issues.

An effective partnership between the Auditor and the Council increases agency accountability, calls attention to potential problems before they become crises, and prevents abuses of the public trust. By providing the Council with objective assessments of the impact of programs, policies, and agency operations, the D.C. Auditor facilitates decision making and prevents the mismanagement of public funds.

The Office of the D.C. Auditor has three primary stakeholders, the Council of the District of Columbia, District residents, and District agencies. While each stakeholder shares an interest in effective governance, to build positive relationships and increase interest in the work of Office of the D.C. Auditor, the Auditor must address the specific concerns of each stakeholder.

To address the concerns of the Council, the Office of the D.C. Auditor must provide quality audit work that is timely, objective and based on evidence. The absence of timely audits prevents the Council from making informed decisions.

To address the concerns of residents, the Auditor must provide audit reports that are relevant and readable. The Auditor should use the Office of the D.C. Auditor's website to explain the responsibilities and operations of the Office of the D.C. Auditor.

Finally, the Auditor should provide agencies with information about the audit process and the status of current audits. We must convince agency officials that audits are beneficial, cooperative endeavors. It is important that agency officials understand that audits are not an adversarial process. Audit reports provide agencies with valuable insight regarding whether agency business processes are efficient, policies and procedures are effective, and whether programs delivered the intended result.

As the D.C. Auditor, I will increase the transparency of our operations. We will continue to strengthen governance by providing credible, objective audit reports that matter to the residents of the District. During my tenure as Acting D.C. Auditor, we took the following steps to increase transparency and improve operations:

- We developed an Audit Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2012. The Fiscal Year 2012 Audit Work Plan includes 24 performance audits, 9 financial reviews, 7 reports on compliance with Certified Business Enterprise Goals, 3 reports on the implementation of recommendations presented in previous audit reports, and 2 reports on the financial activities of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. We shared the Work Plan with members of the Council and heads of District agencies and departments. The Work Plan is also posted on our website.
- We revised the format of audit reports to decrease the use of technical jargon. Our audit reports now include a section titled, What This Report Means to You, to make reports more meaningful for residents.
- We updated the Office of the D.C. Auditor's website. The revised website includes a description of the audit process and a self-assessment that agencies can use to review internal control and evaluate the implementation of policies and procedures.

- We determined that outsourcing the financial review of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions would be more cost effective. A Request for Proposals for accounting firms to conduct ANC financial reviews will be released shortly.

If approved by the Council, I will continue to work to ensure that our audit reports focus on economy, efficiency, and accountability and present recommendations that improve programs and result in cost savings.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these remarks. I will respond to any questions.
