

what we understand D.C. General to be.

D.C. General is not a hospital that is set up on the idea of making money. D.C. General is a hospital that is set up for service to the poor, and since we've got a whole lot of poor people: Jesus said, "the poor, you have with you always." So that means you *always* have to have a public hospital that doesn't mind taking care of the poor. We're interested in health care, not wealth care. The wealthy people, they can build their condos someplace else. We're not against them having condos, hotels, marinas, and anything else they want to build. They can build all of those things, *but not on the site of D.C. General Hospital!* That's what we're saying: Go somewhere else with that! D.C. General Hospital is sacred ground. It is consecrated for the care of the poor and the indigent and those who have no other options. We cannot allow a policy or plan to go forward that is so mean-spirited, that it would deny the poor the only option that they have.

Kevin Chavous

'We Will Fund the Hospital'

Remarks by Kevin Chavous, Member of Washington, D.C. City Council:

Thank you. Y'all make me feel right welcome here. First of all, to our panelists, our host Reverend Wilson, I heard Dr. Speed, Dr. Elders, all the panelists, Reverend Bevel, whom I've known for many years, Dr. Alim Muhammad. Years ago, you need to know, that Dr. Muhammad and I co-sponsored a health fair in Ward 7, where we talked about some of these various issues. Let's give all of them a round of applause for their leadership.

I will be brief, because we do have an excellent panel assembled here. I do want to follow up on one thing that Dr. Muhammad alluded to, and that is, where things stand. I want to give you some feedback on that. Folks, I am so proud of my colleagues on the City Council. When all 13 of us, *all 13*, and I'm gonna tell you: We don't have no 13-0 votes. We just don't have that. But when 13 of the members of the City Council all stand together, in the face of *intense opposition*, from Capitol Hill, from the Mayor's office, from the Control Board, from members of the business community, in the wake of all that opposition, for my colleagues to say, "No. We're not going to shut this hospital down; and not only are we going to vote to keep the hospital open, we're going to put our money where our mouths are, Mr. Mayor. So we will fund the hospital for the next year." And that's what we did last week.

Now, where it stands is: The Mayor can veto that action, and it takes nine votes to override the veto. Well, we've got

those votes. And then, once we override—and we will, 13-0, we will override—once that happens, it is in the hands of the Control Board. And you know what a member of the media said to me—and then I'll sit down. I just want to share this with you. He said, "Now, Councilman, don't you feel that you're threatening home rule, by doing something Congress doesn't want you to do?"

I said, "Well, what are they going to do? Take away our right to vote?" "What are they going to do, take away our budget autonomy? Our legislative autonomy? What are they going to do, take away our voting members of Congress? I mean, what are they going to do? Put in a Control Board to oversee what we do?" You know what, under these circumstances, I'll take my chances with Congress. I'll take my chances. Sometimes when your back's up against the wall, you ain't got nowhere else to go but forward! And to me, this vote is a vote on moving forward. And we're going to continue that fight. God bless each and every one of you, and we are going to *win*, 'cause we are *right*.

Dr. Joycelyn Elders

'Don't Be Afraid of Failure'

Remarks by Dr. Joycelyn Elders, former Surgeon General of the United States:

Thank you very much. . . . I was asked by the media tonight, "Why did you come? It's all over, it's all done." Well, first of all, I came because I was asked. I came because I was asked about something that I believe in. All of you know that if I don't believe in something, I don't run around pretending I do. My mom told me, "Always speak the truth." She said, "The day you see the truth, and cease to speak the truth, is the day you begin to die." And all of you know, I'm going to live forever.

I bet the only political group in this country that's ever had a 13-0 vote, or a 100-0 vote, related to health care was the D.C. Council. You know how we are, you know we believe in having health care for the haves, and sick care for the have-nots. If we start talking about prisons, jails, we always go out and vote to tax to build a jail. But when we start talking about food, start talking about hospitals, start talking about health care for the poor, where are we? "We don't have the money." But we've always got plenty of money to build another jail, to send another young person out to the prison. Since 1980, we've spent far more money on jails than we've spent on schools. And we wonder why we have so many young, black men in prison, where very often we're sending them to schools and they graduate from high schools with diplomas that they can't read. Shoes that light up when they walk, and a brain