

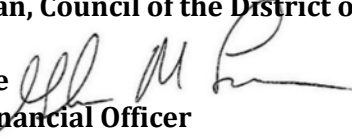
Government of the District of Columbia
Office of the Chief Financial Officer



Glen Lee
Chief Financial Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

FROM: Glen Lee 
Chief Financial Officer

DATE: October 27, 2026

SUBJECT: Fiscal Impact Statement – Let Our Vows Endure Amendment Act of 2025

REFERENCE: Bill 26-441, Draft Committee Print as provided to the Office of Revenue Analysis on October 21, 2026

Conclusion

Funds are sufficient in the revised fiscal year 2027 through fiscal year 2030 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

Background

District law¹ recognizes marriage as a legal union between any two persons regardless of gender, subject to specific exclusions². The Clerk of the Superior Court of the District issues marriage licenses, licenses officiants, and receives marriage certifications from officiants in the District through the Marriage Bureau.³ The Clerk charges fees for services, produces certified copies of marriage licenses, and keeps all records of its transactions.

The federal government funds the operations of the District Courts and maintenance of their infrastructure through Congressional appropriations.⁴ If there is a lapse in appropriations for the

¹ D.C. Official Code § 46-401.

² Unless the marriage is expressly prohibited by D.C. Official Code § 46-401.01 (marriage between certain relatives or bigamy) or D.C. Official Code § 46-403 (age of consent).

³ <https://www.dccourts.gov/superior-court/superior-court-divisions/family-court-operations-division/marriage>.

⁴ National Capital Revitalization and Self-Government Improvement Act of 1997, Pub. L. No. 105-33, 111 Stat. 251 (1997).

District Courts, federal law limits the District Courts during the lapse of funding to certain operations such as those that are financed from a source other than annual appropriations, are emergencies involving the safety of human life or the protection of property, or are necessary to an orderly shutdown of the Courts’ functions.⁵ The issuance of marriage licenses and performance of marriage ceremonies ceases during the lapse.

The bill creates a new section of code authorizing the Mayoral issuance of marriage licenses and approval of officiants whenever the Clerk of the District Superior Court is unable to do so because of a full or partial federal government shutdown.⁶ During such shutdown periods, the bill provides for the Mayor’s temporary assumption of the Clerk’s responsibilities for specific marriage-related duties⁷. In both 2019 and 2025, the federal government shutdown resulted in the closure of the Superior Court’s Marriage Bureau. The Council enacted emergency legislation in both years delegating temporary authority to the Mayor—exercised through the Office of the Secretary (OSEC)—to issue marriage licenses until the Court reopened.

The bill requires the Mayor to develop a marriage-officiant license form⁸ that allows for completed licenses to be returned either to the Superior Court Clerk’s Office; or to the Mayor or an appropriate executive-branch office. The bill directs the Mayor to issue this modified license form to individuals authorized⁹ to perform marriage ceremonies when issuing such licenses is permitted.

The bill requires the Mayor to maintain accurate records related to marriage licenses issued during a federal shutdown, which include:

- A sealed copy of each marriage license the Mayor issues.
- Every marriage license certificate returned by authorized¹⁰ officiants.
- A record book listing the names and residences of all couples who received licenses from the Mayor.
- A record book listing all authorized¹¹ officiants who returned completed license certificates, along with the corresponding license numbers.

The bill provides that a certified copy of any marriage license or marriage certificate kept by the Mayor serves as valid legal evidence of the marriage. The bill requires the Mayor to number all marriage licenses sequentially, starting from one, and include an alphabetical prefix to distinguish licenses issued by the Mayor from those issued by the Superior Court Clerk. The Mayor must send a true and accurate copy of every marriage license issued, and every completed marriage certificate

⁵ 31 U.S.C. §§ 1341, 1342.

⁶ This authority has been granted temporarily via legislation in 2019: A23-0001, which expired on April 11, 2019; 2023: A25-0296, which expired on February 13, 2024, and L25-0117, which expired on September 18, 2024; and 2025: A26-0156, which expired on January 7, 2026, and L26-0076, which expired on August 13, 2026.

⁷ Delegated to the Clerk under Sections 1288(a)(4), 1291, 1292, 1293, and 1295 of An Act To establish a code of law for the District of Columbia, approved March 3, 1901 (31 Stat. 1391; D.C. Official Code § 46-401 et seq.).

⁸ That matches the existing form in section 1293, but with all references to the Superior Court Clerk replaced by references to the Mayor or an appropriate executive-branch office.

⁹ Under Section 1288 of An Act To establish a code of law for the District of Columbia, approved March 3, 1901 (31 Stat. 1391; D.C. Official Code § 46-401 et seq.).

¹⁰ Under Section 1288 of An Act To establish a code of law for the District of Columbia, approved March 3, 1901 (31 Stat. 1391; D.C. Official Code § 46-401 et seq.).

¹¹ Under Section 1288 of An Act To establish a code of law for the District of Columbia, approved March 3, 1901 (31 Stat. 1391; D.C. Official Code § 46-401 et seq.).

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FIS: "Let Our Vows Endure Amendment Act of 2025", Bill 26-441, Draft Committee Print as provided to the Office of Revenue Analysis on October 21, 2026

returned by an officiant, to the Superior Court Clerk within thirty days of the federal government reopening. Copies maintained and certified by the Clerk serve as valid legal evidence of the marriage.

Financial Plan Impact

Funds are sufficient in the revised fiscal year 2027 through fiscal year 2030 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. Upon receiving delegated authority in 2019, OSEC drafted a complete suite of District-issued documents, including a marriage license application and certificate, and designed a workflow capable of functioning outside the Court system, including a secure method for issuing licenses and receiving executed certificates. The District maintained uninterrupted marriage-licensing services throughout the federal government shutdown in 2025.¹² The Mayor and OSEC do not require additional resources to maintain the existing framework for issuing marriage licenses during a federal government shutdown, including retaining and transmitting records to the Clerk of the Superior Court.

The Mayor will not charge fees for these services, nor issue penalties when an officiant marriage certification is not timely returned, so there are no revenue implications associated with the bill's granting of these authorities to the Mayor.

¹² The District issued 187 marriage licenses in 2019, and 601 marriage licenses in 2025.