

Washington, D.C.



On 16 July 1790, the area we now know as the District of Columbia was selected as our nation's capitol.

The [flag of the District of Columbia](#), consists of three red stars above two red bars on a white background. It is an armorial banner based on the design of the [coat of arms of George Washington](#), first used to identify the family in the twelfth century, when one of George Washington's ancestors took possession of [Washington Old Hall](#), then in [County Durham](#), north-east [England](#). As elements in [heraldry](#), the stars are properly called [mulletts](#).

For over a century, the [District of Columbia](#) was without an official flag and flew several unofficial banners—usually the flag of the [D.C. National Guard](#). In 1938, [Congress](#) established a commission to choose an official, original design. The commission held a public competition, and picked the submission of [graphic designer](#) Charles A.R. Dunn, who had first proposed his design in 1921.

His design was officially adopted on October 15, 1938, using the following specification:

The proportions of the design are prescribed in terms of the hoist, or vertical height, of the flag as follows: the upper white portion shall be 3/10 of the hoist; the two horizontal bars are each 2/10 of the hoist; the white area between the bars 1/10 of the hoist; and the base, or lowest white space, is 2/10 of the hoist. The three five-pointed stars have a diameter of 2/10 of the hoist and are spaced equidistant in the fly, or horizontal, dimension of the flag.^[1]

In 2002, the [D.C. Council](#) debated a proposal to change the flag in protest of the District's lack of [voting rights](#) in Congress. The new design would have added the letters "D.C." to the center star and the words "[Taxation Without Representation](#)" in white to the two red bars, a slogan already in use on the [District's license plates](#). The change presumably would have been temporary and revoked once the city achieved equal representation or statehood. It passed the council on a 10–2 vote, but support for the proposal soon eroded, and then-mayor [Anthony A. Williams](#) never signed the bill.^[2]

In a 2004 poll on the [North American Vexillological Association](#) website, Washington's flag was voted the best design among United States city flags.^[3] In 2001, the flag placed eighth in design quality out of the 72 Canadian provincial, U.S. state, and U.S. territory flags ranked.