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Plaskett Raises Voice for U.S. Territories During Speaker Selection Process

Ahead of her sixth term, Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett called out the lack of voting rights for territorial representatives, describing it as part of the nation's "colonies problem," sparking bipartisan reactions.

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett advocated for Americans living in U.S. territories during the House Speaker election process for Mike Johnson. By X, FORMERLY TWITTER

Before Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett was sworn in to represent the Virgin Islands in the U.S. House of Representatives for a 6th term in office, she raised the question of why she and fellow representatives from American territories, as well as Washington D.C., were not given an opportunity to participate in the selection of the body's Speaker.

During Friday's session, following a first failed vote for Mike Johnson as Speaker, Congresswoman Plaskett rose to make a parliamentary inquiry. "I note that the names of the representatives from the American Samoa, Guam, Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia were not called, representing collectively four million Americans," she began, before being interrupted by a standing ovation from her Democratic colleagues. These overlooked Americans, Delegate Plaksett continued, represent "collectively the largest per capita of veterans in this country."

However, House Clerk Kevin McCumber argued that "Delegates-elect and the resident Commissioner-elect are not qualified to vote. Representatives-elect are the only individuals qualified to vote in the election of a speaker." Quoting from Section 36 of the House Rules and Manual, Mr. McCumber said that "the Speaker is elected by a majority of the members-elect, voting by surname."

"This nation has a territories and a colonies problem," Delegate Plaskett retorted, noting that "what was supposed to be temporary has now effectively become permanent," before her microphone was cut off and Democratic members of the House once again supported their colleague with a standing ovation. "I have a voice," she was heard saying, before her audio was once again cut amidst boos from the Republican side of the house.

In a statement following her swearing-in, Congresswoman Plaskett said that she would "continue to advocate for the policies that grow the economy from the middle out and bottom up," while also "pushing back against extremism wherever necessary."

She said that the Democratic caucus in the House was "united and ready to get to work now to lower grocery prices, drive down healthcare costs, and make housing more affordable for hardworking American taxpayers."