

# **The Ability to Win Isn't the Best Reason to Run**

**By Tommy Wells**

Since my mayoral bid in the April 1 primary, reporters and supporters have asked me if I will run for the At-Large Council seat that David Catania must vacate to run for Mayor himself. Historically, this is a no-brainer: I just came off a citywide race and likely could easily overwhelm a crowded field of lesser-known candidates. But, true leadership means knowing when innovation is threatened by routine. It means knowing when one's drive—and ability—to govern effectively is overshadowed by the desire to stay in office.

That said, I have decided that I will not be running for the At-Large Council seat. The Council needs an infusion of fresh leadership, and I need to apply my Council experience to new challenges.

While it takes time for newly elected council members to learn the ropes, once they do, they bring fresh energy and perspective that more than compensates for time spent on the learning curve. They are eager to get to work on fulfilling their promises, testing new ideas, and addressing the very issues that inspired them to run for office—and won them the votes of their constituents.

I am proud of what I have accomplished during my two terms as the Ward 6 Councilmember. My service has brought action, advocacy, and innovation to our city. I passed a bag fee that has dramatically reduced pollution and funded the cleanup of the Anacostia River; championed and secured funding for expanded Circulator bus lines and a streetcar system that will connect underserved D.C. neighborhoods to jobs and city amenities; advanced social justice reforms including the decriminalization of marijuana possession and a minimum wage increase; and worked with Ward 6 residents to make our elementary schools the envy of our city.

But I am not the only one with the capacity to advance our city's interests on the Council. As the nation's capital, DC produces and attracts some of the country's most accomplished, passionate, committed and ambitious professionals. I am excited about the prospect of electing at least three new Councilmembers this fall, and I am encouraged by the great work already underway by the new members elected in 2012.

From school reform to transit equity to cleaning up government corruption, D.C. has enormous challenges—challenges that represent avenues for leadership. I will provide persistent focus on these issues throughout the remainder of my Council term.

While my electoral ambitions may not be fully complete, now is the time to give new candidates a chance to show what they can do, while I explore the myriad other ways I can serve our city.