

## HEIGHT OF BUILDINGS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

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MARCH 10, 1910.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

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MR. BORLAND, from the Committee on the District of Columbia,  
submitted the following

### REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 10070.]

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 10070) to regulate the height of buildings in the District of Columbia, report the same back to the House with the recommendation that it do pass.

The draft of this bill was submitted to this committee by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia and its passage recommended in the following letter:

OFFICE COMMISSIONERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,  
Washington, January 22, 1910.

SIR: The Commissioners of the District of Columbia have the honor to submit herewith draft of a bill to regulate the height of buildings in the District of Columbia, and to request its enactment.

There are various laws now existing in relation to this matter, and the object of the proposed bill is to put in concrete form these various laws and the building regulations on the same subject which are somewhat conflicting and obscure, and also to make other provisions designed to limit the construction of combustible buildings and to encourage the construction of fireproof buildings.

The changes, in detail, from the provision of existing law and regulations are indicated on the inclosed memorandum.

Very respectfully,

HENRY B. F. MACFARLAND,  
President of the Board of Commissioners  
of the District of Columbia.

HON. SAMUEL W. SMITH,  
Chairman Committee on the District of Columbia,  
House of Representatives.

The following is the memorandum of the changes in detail proposed to be made in the present law by this bill, which is referred to in the last clause of the above letter:

Section 1: Present act permits the erection of a nonfireproof building to a height of 5 stories, or 60 feet above the sidewalk.

Proposed act permits 4 stories, or 50 feet in height.

Section 2: Present act permits the erection of a building used for business purposes solely to a height of 75 feet, without being of fireproof construction.

Proposed act reduces this height to 60 feet.

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Section 3: Proposed act requires all hotels, apartment houses, and tenement houses 3 stories in height or over to be of fireproof construction up to and including the main floor, and increases the floor area that must be inclosed by fireproof partition walls to 2,500 square feet.

The present act has no requirement that this class of buildings shall be fireproof up to and including the main floor, but there is a building regulation (sec. 122a) requiring a subdivision of area not greater than 1,600 square feet to be completely inclosed by fireproof partition walls.

Under the proposed act every building, including churches, with a hall having a seating capacity of more than 300 persons shall be of fireproof construction up to and including the auditorium floor.

The present law makes this requirement for churches only, whatever their size.

The present building regulations make this requirement for other buildings than churches.

Section 4: Prohibits additions in height to combustible buildings, when such addition would raise the height of the combustible building to a greater limit than that permitted for combustible buildings.

The present act makes this same requirement, but the wording has proved to be ambiguous.

The proposed act provides towers, spires, and domes constructed more than 60 feet above the sidewalk must be fireproof throughout.

The present act does not make this requirement.

The proposed act requires every theater and any part of the building used as a theater to be of fireproof construction.

The present building regulations require this, but not in such specific language.

Section 5. The proposed act permits the erection of fireproof buildings on a business street to a height of 20 feet in excess of the limit permitted by the present law, except that no building is permitted to be erected to exceed in height the present extreme limit of 130 feet.

The proposed act permits, on a residence street 90 feet or over in width, the erection of a building to a height of 85 feet at the highest part of the roof, whereas the present act does not permit the erection on a residence street 90 feet or over in width a building over 80 feet in height.

The proposed act requires that on blocks immediately adjacent to public buildings the maximum height of a building to be erected shall be regulated by a schedule adopted by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia.

The present act has no such provisions. The commissioners have found it advisable to make such regulations, and the present building regulations fix the height of buildings on G and F streets, between Seventh and Ninth, adjacent to the United States Patent Office, and on Fifteenth street, between Pennsylvania avenue and G street, adjacent to the Treasury. This clause is inserted in order that there may be no question as to the right of the commissioners to make such a regulation.

The proposed act requires that buildings erected to front or abut on the plaza shall be fireproof and shall not be of a greater height than 80 feet. The present act has similar requirements.

The proposed act permits spires, towers, penthouses, ventilation shafts, etc., to be erected to a greater height than any limit prescribed in this act when approved by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, provided, however, that such structures shall be fireproof, not used for human occupancy, and they shall set back from the exterior walls distances equal to their respective heights above the adjacent roof.

The present act permits the erection of these structures to a height greater than the permissible roof height of the building, but does not require them to be fireproof nor to set back from the exterior walls.

Section 6 is not changed.

Section 7: The proposed act fixes the height of buildings to be measured from the sidewalk opposite the middle of the front of the building to the highest point of the roof. If the building has more than one front the height to be measured from the elevation of the sidewalk opposite the middle of the front that will permit the greater height.

The present building regulations fixes the height to be measured if the building has more than one front from the main elevation of the sidewalk at the street corners.

Section 8: Makes buildings erected, altered, or raised or converted in violation of the provisions of this act a common nuisance and fixes the manner of prosecution in such cases and fine for maintenance of the nuisance.

The present act has no such provisions.