



ArchivesSpace

# Capozzi (John) Papers

## **An inventory of John Capozzi Papers at DC Public Library**

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

DCPL Special Collections - MLK Library

901 G Street NW

Washington, DC

[archives.dcpl@dc.gov](mailto:archives.dcpl@dc.gov)

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	DCPL Special Collections - MLK Library
<b>Creator:</b>	Capozzi, John J., Jr.
<b>Title:</b>	John Capozzi Papers
<b>ID:</b>	125
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1978-2001
<b>Physical Description:</b>	2.5 Linear feet
<b>Physical Description:</b>	5 Boxes
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English

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## Biographical / Historical

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John Capozzi is a Democratic politician in the District of Columbia. His political career began when he was elected to the Morris County, NJ, Democratic Committee at age 18. After moving to Washington, D.C., in 1978 in order to attend The American University, Capozzi entered the district's political scene through working on several political campaigns and serving on various committees and organizations as a representative of the District's sixth ward, where he lived in the Barney Circle neighborhood. Capozzi was elected to the D.C. Democratic State Committee in 1991, and was appointed to the D.C. Statehood Commission in 1992. In 1994 he was elected as the D.C. "Shadow" or "Statehood" Representative to the U.S. House of Representatives, taking office in January 1995 and serving until January 1997. During his time in this office, Capozzi worked tirelessly to lobby the U.S. Government to grant statehood to the District of Columbia. Capozzi was also elected president of the Barney Circle Neighborhood Association in 1993. The office of U.S. Shadow Representative was established in 1990. Capozzi was the second person to serve in this office. He was preceded by Charles Moreland (1991-1995) and succeeded by Sabrina Sojourner (1997-1999). Shadow Representative is a non-voting and unpaid position in which the Representative lobbies members of Congress for support of statehood for the District of Columbia, through which it would become the nation's 51st state and would be known as the state of New Columbia. During his time in office, Capozzi undertook many efforts to achieve statehood for the District, including letter writing and media campaigns, lobbying in Congress, and even attempting to bring suit against the United States Government for violation of human rights. In addition to his dedication to the fight for D.C. Statehood, Capozzi was an active member of many committees and

organizations as a representative of Ward 6 and the Barney Circle neighborhood, including the Ward 6 Democrats, the D.C. Statehood Commission, and the Barney Circle Neighborhood Association. Capozzi's dedication to his community manifested itself in the creation of the Barney Circle Orange Hat Patrol and the prevention of the completion of the proposed Barney Circle Freeway project. Capozzi earned a Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration from Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, PA (1978), and a Masters of Public Administration from The American University in Washington, D.C. (1980). In addition to his political endeavors, Capozzi owned and operated a technical recruiting firm called C Associates. As a business owner, Capozzi followed in the footsteps of his grandfather, Dominico "Louis" Capozzi, who built a successful dry cleaning and tailoring business, Belcap Co., after immigrating to the United States in 1912. Capozzi remains active in the District political scene, continuing to raise awareness for D.C. statehood, working on political campaigns, including Barrack Obama's presidential campaign, and running for D.C. City Council.

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## Scope and Contents

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The John Capozzi Papers collection contains materials that document Capozzi's activities throughout much of his political career in the 1990's and extending into the early 2000's. The majority of the materials relate to Capozzi's primary activities as D.C. Shadow Representative and advocate for D.C. statehood and the fight to prevent the construction of the Barney Circle Freeway. His papers also include evidence such as press clippings and correspondence that show that he was also interested in a variety of other political and social issues. The collection includes personal and non-personal correspondence and memoranda, press clippings and releases, meeting agendas and minutes, financial information of various committees and organizations with which Capozzi was involved, newsletters, fliers, advertisements, membership lists, by-laws, reports, and ephemera.

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## Arrangement

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Series 1: D.C. Statehood, 1989-2000 [1 linear foot] This series includes materials that document the ongoing fight for statehood and the transformation of the District of Columbia into the state of New Columbia, especially related to the work of John Capozzi during his time as the U.S. Shadow, or Statehood, representative. Other key players in the fight for statehood include D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, Reverend Jesse Jackson, and former D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly. The series contains press clippings, correspondence, financial information and meeting materials from the D.C. Statehood Commission, and media materials such as fliers and scripts for commercials. These materials cover several issues related to the fight for statehood, including information about similar struggles in Alaska and Puerto Rico, retrocession of D.C. territory to Maryland, and the various arguments for and against

full rights of statehood for Washington D.C. Two important events that occurred during the fight for statehood in the 1990's were the Peanut Boycott and the attempts to argue that the U.S. government's refusal to grant statehood to the district is a violation of human rights. In the early 1990's, a dispute erupted over what some statehood activists viewed as a deliberate block of their cause by conservative Southern states. As a result, the Statehood Solidarity Committee called for a local and national boycott of peanut and pecan-related products, which are a major source of revenue for several of the states that were being perceived as the opposition. This portion of the collection includes press clippings, fliers, and reports relating to the nut boycott and the relationship between nut-producing states and the fight for statehood, including the 1992 report by Statehood Solidarity Committee founder Timothy Cooper in which Cooper calls for the ban. Advocate organizations for D.C. statehood such as the Statehood Solidarity Committee have sought to gain support for their cause through arguments that refusal of Congressional representation violates the basic human rights of D.C. citizens. Throughout the early 1990's and especially in 1993, activists filed complaints on these grounds with the United Nations and the Organization of American States, prompting investigations and hearings on the issue. The reports, correspondence, and press materials related to these events reflect that the majority of these petitions were dismissed or ignored due to lack of grounds for the complaints or improper procedures on the part of the plaintiffs.

Series 2: Barney Circle Freeway Fight, 1978-1997 [1 linear foot] This series documents the controversy and events surrounding the proposed construction of a freeway bridge across the Anacostia River to link Interstates 295 and 395. The controversial plan was originally conceived in 1983. The controversy lasted for many years and was a core issue of Capozzi's political career during the 1990's. While proponents claimed that building the connector would help to relieve heavy traffic in the streets of residential neighborhoods, opponents argued that not only would it have little effect on traffic, but that the potential for increased traffic in the Barney Circle area, as well as the use of riverside parkland for the construction of the new bridge, would in turn be detrimental to the Barney Circle community. Several other issues became connected with the controversy over the Barney Circle Freeway, including social issues relating to the racial and economic demographics of the community through which the construction was proposed, connections between the Barney Circle Freeway and the proposed construction of the new Jack Kent Cooke Football Stadium and the Children's Island theme park, funding for other transportation efforts such as the Metro system, the effects of the construction on Anacostia Park, and negative environmental impacts. The controversy affected the mayoral administrations of Marion Barry, who served from 1979-1991, Sharon Pratt Kelly, who served from 1991-1995, and Barry again after he retook office from 1995-1999. After over a decade of controversy, D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton announced in 1997 that plans for the project were officially cancelled and that the nearly \$200 million fund for the project would be reallocated for other transportation projects. This series includes press clippings and releases, reports, memoranda and correspondence (including citizens' letter writing campaigns addressed to both mayors), and background information related to this controversy. In 1993 a legal team led by Fern Shepard from the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund filed a lawsuit against the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) after it was discovered that the soil in the proposed construction area was contaminated with high levels of lead. The lawsuit alleged that the FHWA was violating several laws in moving forward with the project and demanded that construction be halted and a new environmental impact report be created. The series includes reports, complaint files, memoranda and correspondence, press clippings and releases, and background information related to this lawsuit. One of the strongest arguments used by opponents of the freeway was a proposal for an alternative solution designed by architect and civil engineer Joseph Passonneau (1921-2011). Passonneau, former dean of the School of Architecture at Washington University in St. Louis, was a well-known and respected architect who in the 1960's was instrumental in helping to convince Congress and St. Louis officials to build the Gateway Arch.

Passonneau's design for an alternative to the Barney Circle Freeway utilized four new ramps, rather than the proposed new four-lane bridge, to ease the traffic flow. The series includes reports, fliers, and press materials that explain and advocate for Passonneau's design. Sources: Langer, E. 20 September 2011. "Joseph R. Passonneau, Washington architect and engineer, dies at 90." The Washington Post.

Series 3: Barney Circle Neighborhood Watch, 1989-2001[3 folders] As a dedicated member of the Barney Circle community, John Capozzi was active in the Neighborhood Watch. He helped to found the Orange Hat Patrol, a community group dedicated to keeping crime, violence, and drugs off of neighborhood streets. The Neighborhood Watch also actively sponsored vigils, marches, and community events in order to advocate for the prevention of crime in their neighborhood. This series includes press clippings and releases, meeting minutes, fliers, and background information relating to the Barney Circle Neighborhood Watch.

Series 4: Campaign, 1992-1996 [1 folder] This series includes background and biographical information, correspondence, press clippings and releases, and ephemera related to the political background and campaign activities of John Capozzi.

Series 5: D.C. Politics, 1993-1995 [1 folder] This series includes notes, reports, meeting agendas, and other materials related to various D.C. political and social issues, such as budget, education, and health, which are not related to the Barney Circle Freeway Fight or Neighborhood Watch or to the fight for D.C. Statehood.

Series 6: Pollution, 1994 [1 folder] Throughout his political career, Capozzi was interested in issues that related specifically to the challenges faced by the African American community in D.C. This series includes press clippings and background information related to the revelation that the majority of pollution in the D.C. metropolitan area could be found in predominantly African American areas. The series also includes an extensive report on the subject of pollution.

Series 7: General Press, 1990-2000 [1 folder] In addition to D.C. statehood and the Barney Circle Freeway, Capozzi was interested in and collected information relating to various other social, political, and economic issues. This series includes press clippings and releases on topics such as entrepreneurial groups for young African American citizens, tax issues, potholes, and the arrest and trial of D.C. Mayor Marion Barry for drug and tax violations. Also included in the series are several press clippings related to the controversy over perceived anti-Semitism during speeches and activities involving Nation of Islam leader s Kalim Abdul Mohammad and Louis Farrakhan and student organization leader Malik Zulu Shabazz at Howard University in 1994.

Series 8: General Correspondence, 1990-2000 [4 folders] Throughout his career, Capozzi was in contact with various people regarding a variety of subjects including personal and social events, lectures and public appearances, assistance for students writing papers on political subjects, and support for various political campaigns. This series includes general correspondence on a variety of subjects in the form of facsimiles, memoranda, letters, message slips, and cards. It also includes three folders containing undated blank letterhead with the inscription, "John Capozzi/ U.S. Representative/ State of New Columbia."

Series 9: Personal Ephemera, 1993-2000 [1 folder] This series includes notes, personal cards, bills, newsletters, award ceremony programs, and other ephemera that is not related to the Barney Circle Freeway Fight or Neighborhood Watch or to the fight for D.C. Statehood.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

DCPL Special Collections - MLK Library

901 G Street NW  
Washington, DC  
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### Custodial History

John Capozzi donated his papers to the Washingtoniana Division of the D.C. Community Archives on 28 October 2006.

### Processing Information

Processing of this collection consisted of sorting materials into series and refolding into archival housing. Unnecessary original housing materials were discarded. Materials are arranged chronologically in each folder, with undated items in the front. Where necessary, rusted paper clips and staples were removed and replaced with plastic clips.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Politics and government
- Minutes (Records)
- Organizational Records
- Correspondence
- Political campaigns
- Ephemera
- Community development, Urban
- Statehood (American politics)

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## Collection Inventory

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**Series 1: D.C. Statehood, 1989-2000**

## Scope and Contents

This series includes materials that document the ongoing fight for statehood and the transformation of the District of Columbia into the state of New Columbia, especially related to the work of John Capozzi during his time as the U.S. Shadow, or Statehood, representative. Other key players in the fight for statehood include D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, Reverend Jesse Jackson, and former D.C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly. The series contains press clippings, correspondence, financial information and meeting materials from the D.C. Statehood Commission, and media materials such as fliers and scripts for commercials. These materials cover several issues related to the fight for statehood, including information about similar struggles in Alaska and Puerto Rico, retrocession of D.C. territory to Maryland, and the various arguments for and against full rights of statehood for Washington D.C.

Two important events that occurred during the fight for statehood in the 1990's were the Peanut Boycott and the attempts to argue that the U.S. government's refusal to grant statehood to the district is a violation of human rights.

In the early 1990's, a dispute erupted over what some statehood activists viewed as a deliberate block of their cause by conservative Southern states. As a result, the Statehood Solidarity Committee called for a local and national boycott of peanut and pecan-related products, which are a major source of revenue for several of the states that were being perceived as the opposition. This portion of the collection includes press clippings, fliers, and reports relating to the nut boycott and the relationship between nut-producing states and the fight for statehood, including the 1992 report by Statehood Solidarity Committee founder Timothy Cooper in which Cooper calls for the ban.

Advocate organizations for D.C. statehood such as the Statehood Solidarity Committee have sought to gain support for their cause through arguments that refusal of Advocate organizations for D.C. statehood such as the Statehood Solidarity Committee have sought to gain support for their cause through arguments that refusal of Congressional representation violates the basic human rights of D.C. citizens. Throughout the early 1990's and especially in 1993, activists filed complaints on these grounds with the United Nations and the Organization of American States, prompting investigations and hearings on the issue. The reports, correspondence, and press materials related to these events reflect that the majority of these petitions were dismissed or ignored due to lack of grounds for the complaints or improper procedures on the part of the plaintiffs.

<b>Title/Description</b>	<b>Instances</b>	
Media, 1993	Box 1	Folder 1
Press, 1991-1998	Box 1	Folder 2
Correspondence, 1992-1996	Box 1	Folder 3
Financial, 1994-1996	Box 1	Folder 4
Retrocession, 1995-1996	Box 1	Folder 5
Peanuts, 1991-1994	Box 1	Folder 6
Human Rights, 1993-1995	Box 1	Folder 7
Alaska, Undated	Box 1	Folder 8
Puerto Rico, 1990-1996	Box 1	Folder 9
Background and Literature, January-August 1992	Box 1	Folder 10
Background and Literature, September 1992-1996	Box 2	Folder 1
Background and Literature, 1995	Box 2	Folder 2
Commission Meetings, 1989-June 1994	Box 2	Folder 3
Commission Meetings, July-August 1994	Box 2	Folder 4



Commission Meetings, September-December 1994	Box 2	Folder 5
Commission Meetings, 1995-2000	Box 2	Folder 6

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## Series 2: Barney Circle Freeway Fight, 1978-1997

### Scope and Contents

This series documents the controversy and events surrounding the proposed construction of a freeway bridge across the Anacostia River to link Interstates 295 and 395. The controversial plan was originally conceived in 1983. The controversy lasted for many years and was a core issue of Capozzi's political career during the 1990's. While proponents claimed that building the connector would help to relieve heavy traffic in the streets of residential neighborhoods, opponents argued that not only would it have little effect on traffic, but that the potential for increased traffic in the Barney Circle area, as well as the use of riverside parkland for the construction of the new bridge, would in turn be detrimental to the Barney Circle community. Several other issues became connected with the controversy over the Barney Circle Freeway, including social issues relating to the racial and economic demographics of the community through which the construction was proposed, connections between the Barney Circle Freeway and the proposed construction of the new Jack Kent Cooke Football Stadium and the Children's Island theme park, funding for other transportation efforts such as the Metro system, the effects of the construction on Anacostia Park, and negative environmental impacts. The controversy affected the mayoral administrations of Marion Barry, who served from 1979-1991, Sharon Pratt Kelly, who served from 1991-1995, and Barry again after he retook office from 1995-1999. After over a decade of controversy, D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton announced in 1997 that plans for the project were officially cancelled and that the nearly \$200 million fund for the project would be reallocated for other transportation projects. This series includes press clippings and releases, reports, memoranda and correspondence (including citizens' letter writing campaigns addressed to both mayors), and background information related to this controversy.

In 1993 a legal team led by Fern Shepard from the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund filed a lawsuit against the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) after it was discovered that the soil in the proposed construction area was contaminated with high levels of lead. The lawsuit alleged that the FHWA was violating several laws in moving forward with the project and demanded that construction be halted and a new environmental impact report be created. The series includes reports, complaint files, memoranda and correspondence, press clippings and releases, and background information related to this lawsuit.

One of the strongest arguments used by opponents of the freeway was a proposal for an alternative solution designed by architect and civil engineer Joseph Passonneau (1921-2011). Passonneau, former dean of the School of Architecture at Washington University in St. Louis, was a well-known and respected architect who in the 1960's was instrumental in helping to convince Congress and St. Louis officials to build the Gateway Arch. Passonneau's design for an alternative to the Barney Circle Freeway utilized four new ramps, rather than the proposed new four-lane bridge, to ease the traffic flow. The series includes reports, fliers, and press materials that explain and advocate for Passonneau's design.

Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence, 1991-July 1993	Box 3	Folder 1
Correspondence, August 1993-1997	Box 3	Folder 2
Citizens' Letters, 1991-1995	Box 3	Folder 3
Citizens' Letters, 1995-1996	Box 3	Folder 4
Legal, 1992-January 1994	Box 4	Folder 1

Legal, March 1994-1996	Box 4	Folder 2
Background and Literature, Undated	Box 4	Folder 3
Background and Literature, 1987-1997	Box 4	Folder 4
Environmental Assessment, 34912	Box 4	Folder 5
Stadium, 1993	Box 4	Folder 6
Press, 1978-1997	Box 4	Folder 7
Passonneau, 1996-1997	Box 4	Folder 8

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### Series 3: Barney Circle Neighborhood Watch, 1989-2001

#### Scope and Contents

As a dedicated member of the Barney Circle community, John Capozzi was active in the Neighborhood Watch. He helped to found the Orange Hat Patrol, a community group dedicated to keeping crime, violence, and drugs off of neighborhood streets. The Neighborhood Watch also actively sponsored vigils, marches, and community events in order to advocate for the prevention of crime in their neighborhood. This series includes press clippings and releases, meeting minutes, fliers, and background information relating to the Barney Circle Neighborhood Watch.

Title/Description	Instances	
Meetings, 1991-1994	Box 5	Folder 1
Orange Hat Patrol, 1991-2001	Box 5	Folder 2
Background and Literature, 1989-1994	Box 5	Folder 3

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### Series 4: Campaign, 1992-1996

#### Scope and Contents

This series includes background and biographical information, correspondence, press clippings and releases, and ephemera related to the political background and campaign activities of John Capozzi.

Title/Description	Instances	
Campaign, 1992-1996	Box 5	Folder 4

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### Series 5: D.C. Politics, 1993-1995

## Scope and Contents

This series includes notes, reports, meeting agendas, and other materials related to various D.C. political and social issues, such as budget, education, and health, which are not related to the Barney Circle Freeway Fight or Neighborhood Watch or to the fight for D.C. Statehood.

Title/Description	Instances	
D.C. Politics, 1993-1995	Box 5	Folder 5

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## Series 6: Pollution, 1994

### Scope and Contents

Throughout his political career, Capozzi was interested in issues that related specifically to the challenges faced by the African American community in D.C. This series includes press clippings and background information related to the revelation that the majority of pollution in the D.C. metropolitan area could be found in predominantly African American areas. The series also includes an extensive report on the subject of pollution.

Title/Description	Instances	
Pollution, 1994	Box 5	Folder 6

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## Series 7: General Press, 1990-2000

### Scope and Contents

In addition to D.C. statehood and the Barney Circle Freeway, Capozzi was interested in and collected information relating to various other social, political, and economic issues. This series includes press clippings and releases on topics such as entrepreneurial groups for young African American citizens, tax issues, potholes, and the arrest and trial of D.C. Mayor Marion Barry for drug and tax violations. Also included in the series are several press clippings related to the controversy over perceived anti-Semitism during speeches and activities involving Nation of Islam leader s Kalim Abdul Mohammad and Louis Farrakhan and student organization leader Malik Zulu Shabazz at Howard University in 1994.

Title/Description	Instances	
Press: General, 1990-2000	Box 5	Folder 7

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## Series 8: General Correspondence, 1990-2000

### Scope and Contents

Throughout his career, Capozzi was in contact with various people regarding a variety of subjects including personal and social events, lectures and public appearances, assistance for students writing papers on political subjects, and support for various political campaigns. This series includes general correspondence on a variety of subjects in the

form of facsimiles, memoranda, letters, message slips, and cards. It also includes three folders containing undated blank letterhead with the inscription, "John Capozzi/ U.S. Representative/ State of New Columbia."

Title/Description	Instances	
Correspondence: General, 1992-1998	Box 5	Folder 8
Letterhead, Undated	Box 5	Folder 9
Letterhead, Undated	Box 5	Folder 10
Letterhead, Undated	Box 5	Folder 11

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## Series 9: Personal Ephemera, 1993-2000

### Scope and Contents

This series includes notes, personal cards, bills, newsletters, award ceremony programs, and other ephemera that is not related to the Barney Circle Freeway Fight or Neighborhood Watch or to the fight for D.C. Statehood.

Title/Description	Instances	
Personal Ephemera, 1993-2000	Box 5	Folder 12

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