



Ilir Zherka, Executive Director

Biography (2011)

Ilir Zherka is a life-long activist for civil and human rights, and a leader in the advocacy community.

Ilir joined DC Vote as Executive Director in 2002. As Executive Director, Ilir leads DC Vote's national efforts to raise public awareness about DC's lack of voting representation in Congress, serves as the principal spokesperson for the organization, and manages the day-to-day operations.



Under his leadership, DC Vote has quadrupled in size, brought together a strong coalition of local and national organizations, and advanced DC voting rights legislation in the Congress for the first time in 30 years.

Ilir has served as a Visiting Practitioner at Georgetown University's Center for Public & Nonprofit Leadership, is an associate with Human Systems Dynamics, and the author of the upcoming advocacy strategy book, *Winning the Inside Game*. Ilir has served as an advisor to the last four Democratic presidential campaigns and is an elected member of the Democratic National Committee.

Ilir brings award-winning leadership to DC Vote. In 2007, the Meyer Foundation recognized Ilir with an Exponent Award. He has also received the Urban League's Whitney M. Young Jr. Leadership Award, and Human Rights Community Award, among others. Ilir was featured in a full-length documentary, *Un-Natural State*, and as case study in *Dynamical Leadership: Building Adaptive Capacity for Uncertain Times*, by Kristine Quade and Royce Holladay. He is also a member of the 2011 Class of Leadership Greater Washington.

Before joining DC Vote, Ilir was Co-founder and the first Executive Director of the National Albanian American Council (NAAC). Ilir also promoted worker rights issues while at the US Department of Labor, where he served as a Senior Legislative Officer to Secretary Alexis Herman. Prior to that stint, he was the Legislative Counsel to Congressman George Miller (D-CA) for labor, judiciary, and foreign policy issues. Between 1992 and 1993, Ilir was an IREX Fellow in Albania.

Ilir Zherka graduated with distinction from Cornell University and received his law degree from the University of Virginia.