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A D.C. setting usually doesn't mean a D.C. set for TV series

By Gary Levin, USA TODAY

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It looks like Jefferson Memorial is in the background of this 'Covert Affairs' scene with Oded Fehr and Piper Perabo, but the show isn't actually filmed anywhere near the nation's capital.

By David Giesbrecht, USA Network

The nation's capital is a new favorite subject for TV shows. But almost none of them are actually filmed there.

Showtime's *Homeland*, which is nominated for nine Emmys this year, is shot in Charlotte. USA's *Political Animals*, about a Hillary Clinton-esque secretary of State (season finale Sunday, 10 ET/PT), is produced in a Philadelphia warehouse.

HBO's *Veep* and Netflix's upcoming [Kevin Spacey](#) series *House of Cards* call Baltimore their primary home, though both have shot occasional scenes in the real capital. And other series, from CBS' *NCIS* to ABC's *Scandal* and USA's *Covert Affairs*, are shot in far-flung [Los Angeles](#) and Toronto.

Why is Washington so beloved as a TV subject yet so out of reach as an actual filming location? As with politics, the answer comes down to money and access.

Pennsylvania, [North Carolina](#) and Maryland, among other states, offer 25% tax rebates to film and TV producers, shaving costs from shows that cost \$3 million or more an episode to produce.

"Charlotte is all about the tax breaks," says *Homeland*

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By Kent Smith, Showtime

Showtime's 'Homeland,' which is nominated for nine Emmys (including one for lead actress Claire Danes), substitutes Charlotte for Washington.

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executive producer Alex Gansa. "It was a really simple economic decision."

But Washington also presents challenges even for deep-pocketed producers.

"The stickier problem with shooting in D.C. is your permit can get revoked at any time," says Gansa, who did brief location shoots there for 24 with Kiefer Sutherland. "If the president has to get from Point A to Point B, and you happen to be in the middle, you're at the mercy of that. And on a TV schedule, you can't afford to lose days (of production)."

Crystal Palmer, director of D.C.'s Office of Motion Picture and Television Development, says the district "is not a venue where you can arrive on Monday and film on Wednesday." She says interiors of the White House and congressional and executive office buildings are off-limits, and locations on the Mall are difficult to obtain.

"No way do you impede tourist activities," she says, which New York City officials have no qualms about doing. But Palmer says she has "never heard of a permit being revoked."

The NBC comedy *Parks and Recreation*, which uses Los Angeles as a fill-in for Indiana, traveled to Washington last month to film scenes for its season opener Sept. 27 as Leslie Knope (Amy Poehler) visits Ben Wyatt (Adam Scott), who is now a congressional staffer.

But for most shows, the alternate locations — and the occasional green-screen visual trick — are reasonable stand-ins. *Homeland* uses leafy neighborhoods of Charlotte to approximate D.C.'s Maryland and Virginia suburbs. And, says *Animals* producer Greg Berlanti, "Philly has outstanding architecture that plays for D.C., as well as being eclectic enough for Elaine (Sigourney Weaver) to be traveling anywhere in the world."

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