



NAACP

WASHINGTON BUREAU

December 16, 2019

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: NAACP STRONG SUPPORT FOR H. RES. 641, INVOLVING THE “INSULAR CASES”

Dear Chairman Grijalva,

On behalf of the NAACP, our nation’s oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization, I would like to thank you for your leadership by introducing H. Res. 641, which shines a much-needed light on the racist, ethnocentric, and imperialist-like nature of the Supreme Court’s “Insular Cases.” It is an honor for us to endorse and support this vital legislation. We also appreciate your leadership on need for our Federal government to support the human rights and liberties, as well as the interests of the nearly 4,000,000 Americans living in Puerto Rico, Guan, the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa. Just as it took too long for the U.S. Supreme Court to see the error of its way in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, so must we call out the inappropriate and incorrect nature of its “Insular Cases” decision.

The time to act has long passed; we should act now to correct this injustice. The 1901 “Insular Cases” were decided by the same court which decided the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case. As your resolution so appropriately states, the “notions of Anglo-Saxon racial and imperialist supremacy, along with the perceived racial and cultural inferiority of non-white peoples, drove the outcome of the Insular Cases.” This long-debunked theory, to the detriment of the residents of these islands and archipelagos, is still used today to develop policies. It is time for us to clarify that the people living in these territories are Americans and deserve to live with the same rights and privileges afforded to all Americans by the U.S. Constitution.

Thank you again for your leadership in ensuring the human rights of all peoples, regardless of where they may reside. Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office at (202) 463-2940.

Sincerely,

Hilary O. Shelton
Director, NAACP Washington Bureau &
Senior Vice President for Policy and Advocacy

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

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