



Democratic Party of Puerto Rico

July 19, 2022

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
Chairman, Natural Resources Committee
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I write to you on behalf of the Democratic Party of Puerto Rico to express our gratitude for having introduced H.R. 8393, the Puerto Rico Status Act, a consensus bill cosponsored by Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, Rep. Nydia Velázquez, Rep. Darren Soto, Rep. Ruben Gallego, Rep. Betty McCollum, Rep. Katie Porter, and Delegate Michael F.Q. San Nicolas. The bill is also supported by Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González-Colón and Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar.

Puerto Rico has been a territorial colony of the United States for more than a century. After 124 years under the American flag, the island's undemocratic and unequal territory status has failed both the people on the Island and America as a whole. Congress needs to vote "YES" for H.R. 8393 to finally end colonialism in Puerto Rico.

Even though Puerto Rico residents pay most federal taxes and serve in the U.S. military, the 3.2 million U.S. citizens living in Puerto Rico lack basic democracy having only one non-voting representative in the U.S. House, no U.S. Senators, and no chance to vote in presidential elections. To make matters worse, Puerto Rico can legally be treated differently from states and is therefore excluded from many federal programs. This disparity has diminished Puerto Rico's quality of life, prevented its people from growing their local economy, forced millions of Puerto Ricans to leave for the states, and has hurt veterans with less support and lower benefits.

As you are fully aware, piecemeal solutions to the island's problems are simply not good enough anymore. There is no way to help Puerto Rico fully recover or reach its potential under the current territory status, which is why it is not surprising that on November 3, 2020, an absolute majority of voters in Puerto Rico chose to be immediately admitted into the Union as a state. That was the third time in ten years where voters rejected the territory and favored statehood among the non-territory options.

The leadership of the Democratic Party of Puerto Rico strongly urges you to bring H.R. 8393 to a vote on the Natural Resources Committee and recommend its approval to the House. This bill will finally allow the people of Puerto Rico, your fellow U.S. citizens, the option to choose to become full and equal participants in American society through statehood or to create a separate country through either independence or sovereignty in free association.

Congress cannot continue to perpetuate the injustice of territorial colonialism anymore.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles A. Rodriguez". The signature is written in a cursive style and is set against a light blue rectangular background.

Charles A. Rodriguez
Chair