

PUERTO RICO STATUS ACT

April 2023

On April 20, 2023, Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Raúl M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.) introduced the *Puerto Rico Status Act* with original cosponsors Rep. Nydia Velázquez (D-N.Y.), Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González-Colón (R-Puerto Rico), Rep. Darren Soto (D-Fla.), Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-N.Y.), and Rep. Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.).

Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States. Territory status limits the island's full political, economic, and social development. Puerto Rico's territory status has implications for many aspects of life, including access to federal resources and services, voting power, political representation, foreign affairs, trade, and immigration policy.

The *Puerto Rico Status Act* recognizes the federal government's responsibility to facilitate the decolonization of Puerto Rico. Last Congress, the bill passed the House with bipartisan support, including all Democrats. The Biden-Harris administration endorsed the legislation with a favorable Statement of Administration Policy.

In its broadest terms, the *Puerto Rico Status Act* is a historic offer from Congress to the people living in Puerto Rico to make an informed decision about their political future. The bill lays out the process for voters to make that choice and requires Congress to follow through with the will of the majority of voters.

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE PUERTO RICO STATUS ACT

- Authorizes a federally sponsored plebiscite to resolve Puerto Rico's political status.
- Specifies and defines Puerto Rico's non-territorial status options: 1) Statehood, 2) Independence, and 3) Sovereignty in Free Association with the United States.
- Provides for an objective, nonpartisan, federally funded voter education campaign leading up to the vote.
- Establishes a process and timeline for the U.S. Department of Justice to review the voter education materials and plebiscite ballot design.
- Authorizes necessary funds to carry out an initial plebiscite and, if necessary, a runoff plebiscite.
- Describes the transition to and implementation of each status option in sufficient detail for eligible voters in Puerto Rico to make an informed choice.
- Ensures implementation of the option that is chosen by a majority of valid votes cast.