



REPUBLICAN PARTY OF PUERTO RICO

Hon. Ángel Cintrón García
State Chairman

Zoraida F. Fonalledas, Esq.
National Committeewoman

Hon. Luis G. Fortuño
National Committeeman

July 18, 2022

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Westerman:

For several months, the House Committee on Natural Resources has been considering legislation to help resolve the centuries-old inequality U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico face due to their colonial relationship, first with Spain and for the last 124 years with the United States. This relationship has impeded Puerto Rico's social, economic and political development, given its lack of sovereignty. The inequality and lack of rights that we have experienced during this time is without precedent in American history.

The lack of participation in the government that establishes all our laws is a hinderance to democratic principles which we, the United States seek to project and establish around the world. Government by consent of the governed has eluded us for way too long. Even though every law the U.S. Congress passes applies in full force to Puerto Rico and the 3.2 million U.S. citizens that live here, we have no vote in Congress nor get to vote for our Commander in Chief despite having proudly fought in every war since 1917 and participating in our military forces at a rate higher than most states. During the last 10 years, Puerto Rico has seen a disproportionate number of our residents migrate to the mainland states where they become full citizens upon arrival enjoying the same rights, responsibilities and benefits as our fellow Americans including voting rights. We now total over 6 million living on the mainland.

The Supreme Court and Congress have repeatedly reaffirmed that the current status keeps the U.S. Citizens in Puerto Rico in a state of being wards of Congress with no participation in the key decision making about their lives. The Department of Justice has even indicated that there cannot be a binding ballot question promising some vaguely stated "enhancement" of the status-quo. The People of Puerto Rico need to be able to choose alternatives that provide a permanent

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constitutional status backed by Congress, of either equal footing with the rest of the States or separate sovereignty.

Finally, there is a Bill filed in the House that would provide a structured path to end this last unfinished business of American democracy. H.R. 8393, the Puerto Rico Status Act, is a bipartisan compromise Bill which would finally accomplish what the Republican Party Platform has been supporting for 82 years. The Bill is not the ideal we would have chosen, but it does contain the language of the Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act (H.R. 1522) that the Puerto Rico Republican Party previously supported, and overall, it provides for a fair, democratic process supported by Congress to provide a realistic and constitutional solution to Puerto Rico's democratic status aspirations as supported by the Republican National Committee.

The Republican Party of Puerto Rico has supported statehood since its inception in 1899. The National Republican Committee has repeatedly included statehood in its platforms since 1940, and the last five Republican Presidents have either explicitly advocated for statehood or supported the right of the Puerto Rican people to opt for it once achieving majority support. We look forward to your leadership in a Republican controlled Congress to see that platform made a reality, but at this time it is of the utmost importance that we as Republicans are not seen as obstructing this process, but rather help create a platform upon which we can build in a future Congress.

"If we cannot design a model for a political economy that is sufficiently attractive, if we can't win over our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico, how can our model succeed as an instrument of foreign policy anywhere in the world?" Ronald Reagan, Wall Street Journal, February 11, 1980

The Republican Party of Puerto Rico hereby endorses H.R. 8393 and requests that you as Ranking Member of the committee with jurisdiction support our Resident Commissioner Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colón's efforts. We are aware there will be calls from various interests to introduce procedural hurdles, preconditions and burdens that have not been applied to other territories, extraneous matters, and language to render the bill ineffectual, which even if they fail will be used as "messaging" that there is opposition and obstruction against the process, and there will be bad faith speculation as to motivations. This is why we need to count on your leadership.

This is an important piece of policy that will help the Republican Party of Puerto Rico, an active participant in the election of Republicans across the country, to continue our efforts to open the doors of our tent to more and more Hispanic voters. Not reinforcing what the Republican Party Platform has stood for during the last 82 years would send a terrible message of our commitment to our stated conservative postulates and derail the gains and investment made with this important community. The negative overtones in the media will impact all of us. Last month, KAConsulting LLC surveyed 1,000 Puerto Ricans from across the country focusing on six states where the November stakes for Republicans are highest. The survey found that, "Support for Puerto Rico statehood also carries notable political currency. Nearly 7 in 10 are more likely to support a candidate that supports Puerto Rico becoming a state. Just 13% are less likely."

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That same poll (attached) showed that 46% identified as conservative and 25% as moderate (#36), that over 50% attended religious services at least a few times per month (#39), 85% responded that abortion should be either limited or prohibited in all circumstances (#40), 65% approved of the job Donald Trump did as President (#5), and 63% disapproved of the job Joe Biden is doing as President (#4).

Due to everything mentioned above, we respectfully ask you to support H.R. 8393 and that you rally under your leadership the Republican Members on the Committee on Natural Resources.

We thank you for your leadership on this and other critical issues and look forward to working together in a future Republican Majority in the 118th Congress.

Respectfully submitted,


Angel Cintrón, Esq.
State Chairman


Zoraida F. Fónalledas, Esq.
National Committeewoman


Hon. Luis G. Fortuño
National Committeeman

Enclosures

cc: Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Republican Leader
Honorable Steve Scalise, Republican Whip
Honorable Elise Stefanik, Republican Conference Chairwoman
Honorable Gary Palmer, Republican Policy Committee Chairman
Ronna McDaniel, Chairperson of the Republican National Committee
Republican Members, House Committee on Natural Resources

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