

Opening Statement
Of the Hon. Raúl M. Grijalva
Hearing of PROMESA “Discussion Draft”
October 30, 2019

We are here today for the second day of hearings on legislation I am considering to make amendments to PROMESA – the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act.

I continue to believe this federal law relies on austerity measures that severely impact the quality of life of ordinary Puerto Ricans, to achieve its goals of debt reduction and balanced budgets. For this reason, I wrote the amendments to PROMESA that are part of the “Discussion Draft” we will be discussing today.

The purpose of the hearing is to receive feedback from all stakeholders on the draft’s provisions, which include defining essential public services, assigning federal funding for the operation of the Oversight Board, reducing conflicts of interests, and auditing the debt. The draft also includes provisions to address Puerto Rico’s disaster recovery challenges.

Last week, we received opinions and proposals from officials of the Government of Puerto Rico to address PROMESA and a federal disaster recovery process plagued by inequity towards the residents of the Island. Today, we will hear from witnesses representing academia, nonprofit organizations, and the labor and business sectors. I want to encourage anyone who is not able to be a witness to submit comments for the record.

We have already received reactions both in favor and opposition to some of the provisions in the Discussion Draft. You will hear many of those comments from our witnesses today. I want to caution again

those who raise objections to the provisions, to also offer alternatives to accomplish their goals.

There are two points I would like to emphasize. First, although the Ranking Member has expressed opposition to this effort, it is my responsibility and the responsibility of my colleagues to identify areas of consensus that may have the potential of moving forward. And, if that is not the case in the short-term, to lay the foundation for making improvements in the future.

Second, I recognize that it is impossible to discuss PROMESA without discussing the subordinate political relationship of Puerto Rico with the United States, and the need for new measures to foster economic development in Puerto Rico. As I have expressed before, I remain committed to having that discussion here after introducing legislation to address the shortfalls of PROMESA and disaster recovery efforts in the Island.

Although it is not a priority for the President and the leadership in the Senate, I acknowledge that discussing the political status of Puerto Rico is a priority for the political leaders of the Island, and most importantly for the people of Puerto Rico. Therefore, it should also be a priority for this Congress to hear from representatives of **all political ideologies** – their visions and plans for the political future of the Island.

In closing, I want to welcome our witnesses and thank them for travelling from Puerto Rico to be with us today. I look forward to receiving your testimony and working with each of you on improving the lives of the residents of Puerto Rico.

I yield to the Ranking Member.