



REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
ZORAIDA FONALLEDAS  
NATIONAL COMMITTEEWOMAN FOR PUERTO RICO

**PO BOX 364249**  
**San Juan, PR, USA 00936-4249**  
Tel: (787) 957-9990 | ZoriFonalledas@yahoo.com

April 21, 2021

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva  
Chairman

The Honorable Bruce Westerman  
Ranking Member

U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman:

I have been the National Committeewoman of the Republican Party of Puerto Rico for the last 20 years, and I am very grateful for the opportunity to submit for the record of this Committee my statement in support of the [Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act](#), H.R. 1522, “to provide for the admission of the State of Puerto Rico into the Union.” This bipartisan legislation was introduced on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, which marked the 104th anniversary of Puerto Ricans being granted American citizenship. This legislation would provide congressional action in response to a mandate for statehood, as democratically expressed by voters on the Island in three different electoral events.

It is important to stress the bipartisan nature of this legislation. Equality and full citizenship rights for the people of Puerto Rico is not a Republican nor Democrat issue, it is an American principle. The basic tenet of government with the consent of the governed.

H.R. 1522 provides the framework and mechanism for Puerto Rico to finally attain full self-government and equal rights of U.S. citizenship as a state of the union.

In setting forth this objective, this bill recognizes the importance of providing definitional starting principles. These immutable non-negotiable principles are:

1. Since 1898 Puerto Rico has continuously remained a territory of the United States under the Constitution's Territorial Clause.
2. The U.S. citizenship conferred by statute on Puerto Ricans in 1917 is not fully constitutionally protected for those who have it, nor guaranteed for future generations.
3. The process leading to full self-government has reached its climax, as the people of Puerto Rico have chosen a permanent status – statehood, in a legally held and open electoral event where almost 53% of duly registered voters voted “YES” for the admission of Puerto Rico as a state of the union.

That the Congress even holds these hearings is indisputable proof that the Territorial Clause is applicable to Puerto Rico as is Congress' plenary power over the island. Regardless of what others may allege, congressional legislative initiatives regarding the island's future political status incontrovertibly demonstrate Puerto Rico's current political status: a U.S. territory.

In 2005 and again in 2007, President George W. Bush's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status recommended that Puerto Rico hold a plebiscite asking voters to either accept or reject Puerto Rico's territorial status. In 2012, the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico held this referendum and rejected the current territorial status by a vote of 54% to 46%.

The 2007 report stated explicitly that "if the people of Puerto Rico elect to pursue a permanent non-territorial status, Congress should provide for an additional plebiscite to allow the people of Puerto Rico to choose between one of the permanent non-territorial options permitted by the Constitution: statehood or independence." It is clear that there are only 3 status options outside the Territorial Clause available to decolonize Puerto Rico: statehood and independence (with or without a treaty of free association).

The plebiscite ballot last November adhered to the Bush Task Force recommendation. The vote was clear and decisive.

More recently, the 2016 and 2020 Republican Party platform recognized "the historic significance of the 2012 local referendum in which a 54 percent majority voted to end Puerto Rico's current status as a U.S. territory," and supported "the federally sponsored political status referendum authorized and funded by an Act of Congress in 2014 to ascertain the aspirations of the people of Puerto Rico."

It is time for Congress to fulfill its constitutional duty and provide a process for the voice of Puerto Ricans to be heard. One person, one vote.

When the U.S. troops arrived in Puerto Rico in 1898, General Nelson Miles issued a decree manifesto in which he promised to protect the life, liberty, and happiness of Puerto Ricans, and their property. Last week, 104 years later, was the first time that National Borinqueneers Day was observed in honor of the brave soldiers from Puerto Rico that served in the Korean War with outstanding valor and great sacrifice. I urge Congress to deliver on the promise of General Miles and to honor the brave service of hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Congress needs to pass H.R. 1522 and finalize this unfinished business of American Democracy.

Sincerely,



Zoraida Fonalledas  
National Committeewoman  
Republican Party of Puerto Rico