

June 16,2021

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva  
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Bruce Westerman  
Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources

Dear Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member:

The purpose of this letter is to urge you to act upon Puerto Rico's current colonial and/or territorial status. It is mind boggling to me and many of my Puerto Rican brothers and sisters that the land of the free, has held a colony hostage for 113 years.

Over a quarter million Puerto Rican soldiers have defended our great nation: 18,000 in WWI, 65,000 in WWII, 61,000 in the Korean War, 48,000 in the Vietnam War, 48,000 in the Gulf War and Iraqi Freedom, and 39,000 active, reserve and National Guard members; yet the home of the brave, regrettably, is not home to my Puerto Rican brothers and sisters who have bravely defended our great nation, but cannot vote to elect their Commander in Chief, nor have full representation in Congress. We have earned statehood with the blood of the Puerto Rican brothers and sisters who have proudly defended our nation.

It is unacceptable that Congress has historically chosen to ignore the express will of the American citizens living in Puerto Rico. I do not need to state Puerto Rico's history, as you are well aware of our colonial status, and how that status has kept us from fully enjoying the privileges of American citizenship. The question before you today is whether you choose to act to change that. Puerto Rico and its people certainly are.

Puerto Rico already acts like a state; we have US currency, we already pay federal taxes like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, we speak both English and Spanish and our government has the same structure as other state governments. That notwithstanding, we are not recognized the same the same rights as citizens who live in the other 50 states.

By supporting HR 2070 by Congresswomen Velazquez and Ocasio Cortez you will be doing the complete opposite. You would impose a course of action by Congress that ignores the will of Puerto Ricans who already voted in favor of statehood. That would be the utmost expression of Colonialism and contrary to what the United States of America stands for. Therefore, I strongly urge the members of Congress to support HR 1522 introduced by Congressman Darren Soto and Puerto Rico's lawfully elected official Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González. This is the only bill that respects the will of the 655,505 American citizens living in Puerto Rico, 53% whom voted yes to statehood.

You have the privilege and opportunity today to take a step in the right direction. I strongly urge you to be in the right side of history. Support statehood for Puerto Rico. As American citizens, we deserve no less than our mainland brothers and sisters.

Cordially,



Roberto Lefranc Fortuño  
US Representative (Shadow)  
Puerto Rico