



## Support and Cosponsor H.R. 1522/S.780: Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act

### Historical Background

Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States by Spain at the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898. On April 12, 1900, the Foraker Act (P.L. 56-191) established the first form of civil administration of local government affairs in Puerto Rico. The Foraker Act also established the position of Resident Commissioner to represent the island in Congress. In 1917, through the Jones-Shafroth Act (P.L. 64-368), Congress extended U.S. citizenship by statute to the residents of Puerto Rico and granted further local self-government. In 1952, the Puerto Rico Federal Relations Act (P.L. 81-600) granted Puerto Rico authority over matters of internal governance when Congress approved the island's Constitution. Puerto Rico has since been known formally as the "Commonwealth of Puerto Rico," but the island is still a possession of the United States under the Territorial Clause, Article 4, Section 3 of the United States Constitution.

Since the first World War, Puerto Ricans have fought in every military conflict of the United States. From the honorable service of the Army's 65th Infantry regiment to present day, Puerto Rican service members continue to defend and protect our country honorably. However, these veterans and the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico have no voting representation in Congress and cannot vote for their Commander in Chief. To end this inequality, we urge you to cosponsor and support H.R. 1522/S.780, *Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act*.

### Facts:

- In the last decade, the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico have held three separate plebiscites to resolve their political status, and each time the majority of voters chose statehood.
- On November 3, 2020, Puerto Rico held the general election plebiscite on "[s]hould Puerto Rico be admitted immediately into the Union as a State? Yes or No."
  - Prior to the plebiscite the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico held that the question and the plebiscite to be a legitimate and constitutionally valid exercise of self-determination.<sup>1</sup>
- With a 54.72 % participation rate, the final certified results of the plebiscite were 655,505 votes (52.52 %) "Yes" and 592,671 votes (47.48 %) "No."
- In the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress the legislative proposals to address Puerto Rico's status are as follows:
  - H.R. 1522 and S.780, *Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act*, introduced by Rep. Darren Soto (D-FL-09), Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González-Colón (R-PR At Large), and Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM)
  - H.R. 2070 and S.865, *Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2021*, by Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY-07) and Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ).
- H.R. 1522 and S.780 respect the will of voters and would mandate a binding ratification vote on the statehood "Yes" or "No" question previously presented to Puerto Rican voters and establishes the terms of admission as a state into the Union within 12 months if "statehood" is ratified.
- H.R. 2070 and S.865 reject voters by calling for a non-binding status convention composed of newly elected local delegates, supervised by a federal negotiating commission, to present a potential multitude of status options to voters with no certainty or guarantee that its proposed status option will be accepted by Congress.

*NAPREC is a 501(c)4, nonpartisan and non-governmental non-profit organization, that aims to unite citizens around the United States in civic action to empower, educate, and fight for the equality of Puerto Ricans and equality through statehood for those living on the island.*

<sup>1</sup> Aponte-Rosario, et al., v. President EEC, et al., 2020 PRSC 119 (P.R. 2020)