



July 18, 2022

U.S. House of Representatives
Natural Resources Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Natural Resource Committee Member,

On Wednesday, you have the opportunity to make history and send a message that, regardless of all politics, our U.S. Constitution was written for the benefit of all American Citizens, not just a few. That the U.S. Constitution, which we cherish and fight to defend, is not just a piece of paper but the embodiment of America's ideal of "government by consent of the governed" which must be applied equally to all of the people of the United States of America.

On Wednesday, the only way to uphold America's founding values is to **vote "YES" to H.R. 8393, "Puerto Rico Status Act (PRSA)."** After 124 years under the U.S. flag, this historic bill will finally allow the people of Puerto Rico, your fellow U.S. citizens, the option to choose to become full and equal participants in American society through statehood or to create our own separate country through either independence or sovereignty in free association. In doing so it will also finally end the deeply shameful, undemocratic and fundamentally colonial territory status which Congress has imposed on Puerto Rico for over a century and which is rooted in 19th Century racism, prejudice and bigotry that has no place in 21st Century America.

For over a century the people of Puerto Rico have been subjected to a second-class U.S. citizenship which is not equal to our fellow citizens in the mainland. This disparity has deprived us of voting rights at the federal level, diminished our quality of life, prevented us from growing our local economy, forced millions of Puerto Ricans to leave for the states, and has hurt our veterans with less support and lower benefits. Puerto Rico's territory status has failed the Island and America as a whole, and is simply unsustainable. Enough is enough! We deserve full equality and the precious voting rights which we as veterans served and fought to defend for all Americans. Our U.S. Citizenship in Puerto Rico should not be different because of the place we choose to live in, or the language we speak at home.

The PRSA does not take power away from Congress to decide the future, it empowers Congress to offer the only constitutionally viable non-territorial political status options available to our fellow U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico so they can finally decide to either be fully incorporated into the U.S. as a state or to begin the process of separating into a foreign country. The bill empowers Congress to live up to America's highest values and ideals, and to end a dark chapter of inequality and discrimination in American history.

We thank the members of this Committee for meeting with us, the U.S. veterans of Puerto Rico, during our visit to D.C. this past April, and for responding to the many letters and calls from our fellow citizens in Puerto Rico over the last few months as we conveyed our message urging you to vote for legislation to finally put to an end to Puerto Rico's current territorial colony status.

As a U.S. veteran, I served and many of my Puerto Rican brothers fought, bled and even died to defend the values of our U.S. Constitution. This Wednesday, it is up to you to do your part to honor America's founding values by voting "YES" to H.R. 8393, "Puerto Rico Status Act." God Bless the United States of America!

Respectfully,

Brig. Gen. Víctor Pérez, U.S. Army, Ret.
Chairman, Veterans for Puerto Rico Statehood Task Force