

06.14.21

Chair Grijalva Releases DOJ Analysis of Puerto Rico Political Status Bills, Witness List for This Wednesday's Full Committee Legislative Hearing

This release has been updated from the original version to correct witness positions on bills under discussion.

Washington, D.C. – Chair Raúl M. Grijalva (D-Ariz.) this morning released a long-awaited Department of Justice (DOJ) analysis of the constitutionality and feasibility of two political status bills for Puerto Rico. Grijalva also released the witness list for this Wednesday's legislative hearing on both bills.

One bill, the *Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act* (H.R. 2070) sponsored by Reps. Nydia Velázquez (D-N.Y.) and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), would “recognize the right of the People of Puerto Rico to call a status convention through which the people would exercise their natural right to self-determination, and to establish a mechanism for congressional consideration of such decision.” DOJ's analysis of that bill is available here.

The other, the *Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act* (H.R. 1522) sponsored by Rep. Darren Soto (D-Fla.) and Resident Commissioner Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon (R-P.R.), would “provide for the admission of the State of Puerto Rico into the Union.” DOJ's analysis of that bill is available here.

Grijalva's April 13 letter requesting the analysis is available at <https://bit.ly/35mBIZf>.

“I thank the Department of Justice for submitting its assessments of both bills,” Grijalva said today. “I requested these assessments to inform the Committee's consideration of these important pieces of legislation to resolve Puerto Rico's political status. It is encouraging to see that the Department supports providing the people of Puerto Rico the opportunity to vote on whether to become a State of the Union, as H.R. 1522 would do, and that the Department would support H.R. 2070 if it facilitates a choice among constitutionally permissible status options. Congress has a legal, political and moral responsibility to play a constructive role in resolving Puerto Rico's political status. I look forward to continuing the ongoing work with my colleagues, the

executive branch, and Puerto Rico's elected government officials to advance a process that will resolve this problem, which continues to be a priority for the people of the island.”

On April 13, Grijalva requested DOJ's assessment of “how the proposed legislation aligns with the constitutional law and fundamental policies of the United States.” The DOJ analysis released today establishes that the Department “supports providing the people of Puerto Rico the opportunity to vote on whether to become a state of the Union, as H.R. 1522 would do.”

The Department also “agrees that the people of Puerto Rico should be allowed to choose whether to become a nation independent of the United States, become a state within the United States, or retain the current status of a territory. Insofar as H.R. 2070 would facilitate a choice among those three options, which we believe are the three constitutional options available to Puerto Rico, the Department supports the bill.” The reports also provide specific recommendations to improve the proposed pieces of legislation.

On April 14, the Natural Resources Committee held its first legislative hearing to discuss the bills and heard testimony from local politicians and experts. On June 16, the Committee will hold a second legislative hearing to hear testimony from civil society, including economics and legal academics, and local and diaspora leaders. Resolving Puerto Rico's political status is a priority for Chair Grijalva and the Committee's Office of Insular Affairs.

Witness List

H.R. 1522

- **Rev. Carmen Cabrera**

President, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Faith Council

- **Dr. Christina Ponsa-Kraus**

Professor of Constitutional Law, Columbia University

- **Prof. Andrés L. Córdova**

Professor of Property Law, Inter American University of Puerto Rico

H.R. 2070

- **Luis Gutierrez**

Former Member of Congress

- **Dr. Rafael Cox Alomar**

Professor of Constitutional Law, University of the District of Columbia

- **Annette Martinez-Orabona**

Director, Caribbean Institute of Human Rights

Unaffiliated

- **Dr. José Caraballo-Cueto**

Professor of Economics, University of Puerto Rico

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