



April 9, 2021

Hon. Raúl Grijalva
Representative (AZ-D)
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C., United States of America

Honorable Raúl Grijalva:

We are pleased to formally express our interest to give testimony as a civil society organization in favor of H.R. 2070, Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2021, in the hearings to be held on April 21, 2021.

The Puerto Rican Action Movement (MAP) is a non-partisan political organization that promotes the decolonization of Puerto Rico through Free Association with the objective of achieving social justice for our country, Puerto Rico.

Founded in 2018, we are an organization made up of academics, intellectuals, businessmen and women, diplomats, artists, and professionals, with a vision of the future for Puerto Rico in Free Association with the United States of America.

We are convinced that we can make a valuable contribution to the debate and highlight the relevance, benefits, and convenience of H.R. 2070 to advance the decolonization of Puerto Rico and achieve a clear definition of the formula of Free Association.

You can find more information about the organization we represent on our website www.elmappr.com. Likewise, we attach to this letter a document that summarizes the ideas that we promote.

We welcome the occasion, Honorable Raúl Grijalva, to express to you our highest consideration and esteem.

Efraín Vázquez-Vera
Juan López-Bauzá
Julio Ortiz-Luquis
Javier A. Hernandez
Spokesmen

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U.S. CONGRESS INFORMATIONAL MEETING REQUEST BRIEF

I. Introduction

- A. We are a group of professional Puerto Rican citizens, mostly academics, intellectuals, artists, and businessmen, deeply concerned with the future of Puerto Rico, organized as the Puerto Rican Action Movement (MAP, in Spanish).
- B. What makes us different? We are not politicians, we are not involved in any present political campaign, and we offer a “vision of tomorrow”.
- C. We have concluded that the time is ripe for ending Puerto Rico’s territorial status and for starting a new relationship with the United States.

II. Overview of Puerto Rico’s current situation

- A. It is beyond question at this point that the territorial status of Puerto Rico is no longer expedient or desirable, and not only financially, but also politically, socially, economically, and morally.
 - 1. The territorial economic model is totally bankrupt.
 - 2. Hurricane María did not cause this bankruptcy, but rather uncovered Puerto Rico’s long-standing decline both to Puerto Ricans and Americans alike.
 - 3. If nothing is done, the Puerto Rican economy will rapidly deteriorate further into poverty and chaos.
 - 4. This reality is working against the best interests of both the U.S. and Puerto Rico, since at the present moment:
 - a) All social indicators are plummeting.
 - b) The exodus of people leaving the Island, mostly in their productive age, is unprecedented.
 - c) Corruption in public office is also unprecedented.

“Una nueva forma de ver el futuro”

- d) All the economic assistance given to Puerto Rico now and in the future, and all the best efforts made by Puerto Ricans and Americans in the future, will not stop the Island's rapid decline under the territorial status.
- e) Under the present status, economic production and social development will not improve, forcing the U.S. to spend more and more taxpayer funds in a futile effort. The Puerto Rican public debt will not be paid, and any economic benefit to restore Puerto Rico's economy and social cohesion to the American economy will, sooner or later, completely vanish.

III. Is the current status capable of turning things around?

A. On the US side:

- 1. There is no evidence of U.S. actions or initiatives to support political and economic development are producing any long-term benefits.
- 2. On the contrary, the mistrust, the lack of interest, and the obvious discomfort by the U.S. in dealing with Puerto Rican issues also makes it evident that the U.S. does not believe the current status will bring about a solution to this problem.
- 3. Puerto Rico's Financial Oversight and Management Board is the only bipartisan consensus and action taken recently by the U.S. Government to deal with the territorial crisis. It has become evident for most people in the Island that the Board cannot handle the situation, and its actions are deepening the crisis.
- 4. A new consensus is feasible. Puerto Rico's condition as an unincorporated territory and Congress's plenary power over it are the root cause of Puerto Rico's economic crisis and dependency. A new bipartisan consensus is possible, centered on the need to give full autonomy to Puerto Rico to resolve its own financial, political, economic and humanitarian crisis, with U.S. assistance and support.

B. On the Puerto Rican side:

- 1. Puerto Rico's territorial status is the root cause of the island's degraded economic and social situation. These, in turn, have produced emotional and psychological consequences that have greatly impacted the Puerto Rican people.

2. Puerto Ricans don't know any reality other than the territorial status and having been manipulated by territorial politicians for so long and have become mistrustful and fearful of the political alternatives that offer a real solution to the present situation.
3. The vast majority of Puerto Rican politicians, particularly the corrupt politicians, live off the privileges afforded to them by the territorial status.
4. They have made people hostages of wishful thinking about unattainable future political status options, presenting them with unreal and fantastical alternatives (such as *Creole Statehood* and *Enhanced Commonwealth*) that have eliminated the possibility of any realistic electoral majority.
5. Moreover, Puerto Rican politicians have created a corrupt political system to keep themselves in power and to prevent any real solutions from taking place, while discouraging many decent Puerto Ricans from participating in the political process.
6. Corrupt politicians, mainly from the pro-statehood and pro-commonwealth parties, control the politicized territorial judiciary, the electoral system, the public service, and the legislature.
7. If the U.S. Government is expecting a real and democratic solution to come from these very corrupt politicians, the crisis will only become permanent.
8. Our organization (MAP), represented by a group of experts in Puerto Rico and Washington, DC, favors the only political option that has experienced an actual growth of support among many Puerto Ricans since 1998: Free Association.

IV. What then?

A. Having reached a dead end, our basic premises are:

1. Puerto Rico's territorial status has become a hindrance for a mutually beneficial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico. With Free Association, Puerto Rico would go from being a corrupt and economically depressed territory to an economically prosperous U.S. ally and strategic partner in the Caribbean and Latin America.

2. The change needed to fix this reality will not come from the territorial/traditional Puerto Rican political side, the very corrupt politicians that live off the territorial status and economic dependency.
3. A proper and professional Puerto Rican negotiating party must be composed of honest and trustworthy people, who have the right “vision of tomorrow”, understand economic development, understand the process of negotiation and diplomacy, recognize the U.S. national interest in Puerto Rico, and have the best technical knowledge regarding issues of democracy, public administration, international relations, security, and international trade.
4. Both parties need to have a clear idea of what the outcome might be, and to this end, a team of Puerto Rican and American experts on Free Association and U.S. Territorial Policy, have been working on a document entitled *Principles of Free Association between the United States and Puerto Rico*.
5. If the Principles are endorsed by Congressional Committees and key congressional leadership, the U.S. Government can use them as a basis for an official negotiation process.
6. In the current political, economic, and cultural circumstances, the statehood option for Puerto Rico has absolutely no future, as recent plebiscites and a 2014 General Accountability Office (GAO) Report have demonstrated. This is a well-known fact to most, except for certain politicians in the U.S. and Puerto Rico who have made a career promising that statehood “is just around the corner”, yet knowing full well that statehood has never been a possibility acceptable to the U.S. Congress nor the Puerto Rican people. The last status plebiscites in 2012 and 2017 show that statehood has lost a lot of support.
7. The Commonwealth option, faced with its own dramatic failure and its electoral rejection by more than half of Puerto Rico’s population, cannot be a viable option either. Support for independence has been small, yet stable, for decades. It must be noted that there is a large and growing pro-sovereignty faction within the Commonwealth party that supports Free Association.
8. Puerto Ricans and Americans know very well the consequences of Commonwealth, Statehood and Independence, but not Free Association. If we really want to achieve a just and democratic process, a clear definition of Free Association must be achieved.

9. The political deadlock created by corrupt Puerto Rican politicians must be bypassed in order to bring about some fundamental changes that benefit both the United States and Puerto Rico.

V. Lectures

<https://theglobepost.com/author/efrainandjuan/>

<https://thehill.com/opinion/civil-rights/457090-free-association-is-a-way-out-of-the-puerto-rican-crisis>

VI. Bios

Javier A. Hernández is a Puerto Rican author, artist, linguist, entrepreneur, world traveler, pro-sovereignty advocate, internationalist, and indigenous rights activist. In February 2020, he published *PREXIT: Forging Puerto Rico's Path to Sovereignty*.

He earned a B.A. in Political Science & International Relations from Florida International University; an M.A. in International Communication from The American University; and an M.S. in Education from Lehman College. He has also earned certificates in Diplomacy of Small States (DiploFoundation/University of Malta), Emergency Management, Homeland Security Planning, Global Security Issues, and Non-violent Conflict & Civil Resistance (U.S. Institute of Peace). He is a former federal law enforcement officer and Foreign Service Specialist with the U.S. Department of State. He is committed to social justice, cultural activism, indigenous rights, and Puerto Rican decolonization.

Mr. Hernández is a recognized linguist and is currently one of the few people in Puerto Rico and the United States who are members of the International Association of Hyperpolyglots, being able to speak nine languages and read thirteen other languages. In 2018, he also reconstructed and revitalized a modern variant of the indigenous Taino language of the Caribbean and published its first primer, *Primario Básico del Taíno-Borikenaíki*, which is being used in various indigenous school programs in Puerto Rico.

Mr. Hernández is a small business owner and an emergency preparedness instructor. In 2017, he founded Editorial Libros El Telégrafo, a small boutique publisher. Among other projects, Mr. Hernández designed a National Emblem for Puerto Rico, drafted a proposed national constitution, and drafted various democratic, economic, political, diplomatic, and national security proposals for a future Puerto Rico.

Juan López-Bauzá was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, where he received his primary and secondary education. He received a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Colgate University, Hamilton, New York, in 1988, and was later enrolled in the master's Program in Comparative Literature at the University of Puerto Rico.

He started publishing his first stories in literary magazines and newspapers from Venezuela, Colombia, and Puerto Rico.

In 1997, *La sustituta y otros cuentos*, his first book of short stories, was published by the University of Puerto Rico Press, and was awarded the Puerto Rico Pen Club Award for best book of short fiction published in Puerto Rico during that year. Some of its stories have been included in Puerto Rican literature anthologies.

In 2013, he published his first novel, *Barataria* (LibrosAC) which was awarded Las Americas Award by the Festival de la Palabra. It was also awarded that same year with the Puerto Rico Pen Club Award for best novel published in the country during that year. In 2014, and for the first time ever, the Puerto Rican Academy of Spanish Language nominated *Barataria* for the Spanish Royal Academy of Language Gran Award.

Written before *Barataria*, his second novel, *El Mar de Azov* (LibrosAC), was published in 2015. In 2018, his third novel, *El Resplandor de Luzbella*, was published by worldwide publisher Editorial Planeta in México. On December of this same year, Planeta also published *Barataria*. Mr. Juan López-Bauzá is considered nowadays one of Puerto Rico foremost writers.

Julio Ortiz-Luquis. PhD in International Relations and European Integration, Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain, 2015), MA in International and Peace Studies from the University of the Basque Country (Spain, 2007), MA in International Relations, City College of New York and a BA in History of the Americas from the University of Puerto Rico (2000). Dr. Julio Ortiz-Luquis is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science and Law at Montclair State University (NJ), where he teaches courses on International Relations and Political Science, and at the Borough of Manhattan Community College where he offers seminars on Caribbean and Latin American Studies.

He is the grantee of the international fellowship of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country's International Cooperation Agency and was appointed to work as Mission Expert of local human development projects in the UNDP-Country Office in Caracas, Venezuela (2007-2009). From 2005 to 2008 he worked as a diplomatic agent for the Committee of Puerto Rico in the United Nations (COPRONU) in the United Nation's Decolonization Committee.

Since 2006, he has published essays and opinion articles on international law, multilateralism, regionalism, international relations and foreign policies of Latin America and the Caribbean, and on the Para-diplomacy of Puerto Rico in specialized journals and magazines in Cuba, Venezuela, Spain, Puerto Rico and the United States. In 2006, he gave a lecture on the development strategies of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico for the Department of International Studies of the University of the Basque Country. Since 2016, he has lectured on the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) at the Andean University Simon Bolivar (Quito, 2012) and on regionalism and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) invited by the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO-Quiro) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in 2015. In 2013, he offered a conference on CELAC and International Law for Brooklyn College's Department of Puerto Rican and Caribbean Studies and the Department of Political Science.

In 2016, invited by the First Congress of the Puerto Rican Association of International Relations (APRI), he gave the presentation "Puerto Rican Para-diplomacy in the Hispanic Caribbean and the Regionalism of the 21st Century" as part of the panel on Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. In 2018, Dr. Ortiz Luquis was invited to comment on the panel on Puerto Rico's para-diplomacy in historical perspective, held during the annual conference of the American Association of Historians.

Regarding his academic service, he was editor and peer reviewer of special editions on international relations in Latin America and the Caribbean for the journal *Comentario Internacional* (Ecuador) and the Brazilian Journal of International Relations. Since 2017, Dr. Ortiz-Luquis is associate editor of the Handbook of Latin American Studies of the Library of Congress in Washington DC, chapter on International Relations of the Hispanic Caribbean.

Efraín Vázquez-Vera is a Caribbean Internationalist, and Full Professor at the University of Puerto Rico. He holds a Doctorate and a master's in International Relations from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain), a master's in strategic studies and international security from the Universidad de Granada (Spain) and is a graduate of the Diplomatic School at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain. He has several publications on international and Caribbean affairs as well as on Puerto Rican political and socioeconomic development.

He has been awarded several scholarships including the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board at Jordan of the U.S. Department of Education, the U. S. Speaker and Specialist Grant in Haiti of the U.S. Department of State, the Institute of Iberoamerican Cooperation Scholarship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, and the Presidential Grant of the University of Puerto Rico. From 2001 to 2003, Doctor Vázquez-Vera was Assistant Secretary of State at the Department of State of Puerto Rico. He served as an Adviser on Foreign Affairs (2006-2011) at the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and several Eastern Caribbean governments. In addition, he collaborates with public and private radio and television stations as an analyst on international news events.

He was also Honorary Consul (2008-2013) of Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, and St. Vincent & the Grenadines in Puerto Rico. In 2010, the King of Spain gave the title of Commander of the Order of Merit of Spain in recognition of his academic and diplomatic work in the Eastern Caribbean. On March 16, 2013, the Governor of Puerto Rico appointed Dr. Efraín Vázquez-Vera Chief of Mission of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Office in the Dominican Republic. He was Chancellor of the University of Puerto Rico at Humacao (1 July 2014- 1 August 2016). In 2016, the King of Spain gave the title of Commander of the Order of Isabella the Catholic in recognition of his work in Puerto Rican higher education.