



March 4, 2025



The Honorable Mike Lee  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and  
Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Martin Heinrich  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and  
Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, DC 20510



The Honorable Bruce Westerman  
Chairman  
U.S. House Committee on Natural  
Resources  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman  
Ranking Member  
U.S. House Committee on Natural  
Resources  
1329 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515



Dear Chairman Lee, Ranking Member Heinrich, Chairman Westerman and  
Ranking Member Huffman:

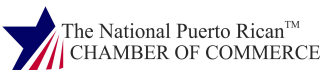
We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to introduce legislation to  
finally end Puerto Rico's undemocratic territory status through a binding offer of  
statehood. After over 126 years of the island's unincorporated territory status, it is  
essential for Congress to definitively address the democratic deficit endured by  
the 3.2 million American citizens living in Puerto Rico.



As an unincorporated territory of the U.S., the island's residents are denied full  
access to constitutional rights and eligibility for certain federal laws and programs.  
Additionally, Puerto Rico's residents lack representation at the federal level with a  
single non-voting member in the U.S. House, no representation in the U.S. Senate,  
and the inability to vote for President. This persists even though hundreds of  
thousands of Puerto Ricans have served in the U.S. Armed Forces in every conflict  
since World War I. These democratic deficits are the reasons why the island's  
residents have voted to end Puerto Rico's territory status and in favor of statehood  
in the last four local plebiscites this century. This includes the most recent plebiscite  
held on November 5, 2024, when 58.6 percent of voters chose statehood over the  
other non-territorial options available to Puerto Rico.<sup>1</sup>



March 2, 2025, marked the 108th anniversary of Puerto Ricans being granted U.S.  
citizenship.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, we urge you to address the root cause of the island's  
inequality and hardships by providing the legislative means to attain full equality.  
Puerto Rican voters have spoken in four consecutive free, fair, and secure  
plebiscites in favor of statehood. Now it is time for Congress to hear the will of the  
majority of Puerto Rico's voters and finally address the island's democratic deficit.



**2024 Plebiscite Ballot**

The options on the [2024 Plebiscite Ballot](#) were identical to the options proposed in  
the historic legislative compromise between federal and local stakeholders, the  
*Puerto Rico Status Act* (PRSA).<sup>3</sup> The PRSA recognized the responsibility of Congress  
to address this issue, and would have enabled Puerto Rico's voters to decide their



<sup>1</sup> *Official Plebiscite Results 2024*, P.R. State Elections Comm'n (Jan. 17, 2025),  
[https://elecciones2024.ceepur.org/Plebiscito\\_2024\\_122/index.html#en/default/PLEBISCITO\\_Resume\\_n.xml](https://elecciones2024.ceepur.org/Plebiscito_2024_122/index.html#en/default/PLEBISCITO_Resume_n.xml).

<sup>2</sup> *An Act to provide a civil government for Porto Rico, and for other purposes*, H.R. 9533, 64th Cong.,  
39 Stat. 951 (1917); see also *Immigration and Nationality Act*, 8 U.S.C. § 1402 (2025).

<sup>3</sup> *Plebiscite Model Ballot 2024*, P.R. State Elections Comm'n,  
<https://ceepur.org/plebiscito2024/docs/Papeleta%20Modelo%20Plebiscito%202024.pdf> (last  
viewed on Mar. 2, 2025); see also *Puerto Rico Status Act*, H.R. 8393, 117th Cong. (2022).





future political status among non-territorial and constitutionally viable options of “Statehood,” “Independence,” or “Free Association” with the U.S.<sup>4</sup>

The exclusion of the current territory status in the PRSA and the 2024 plebiscite, was in recognition of the will of voters in the island’s previous plebiscites of 2012, 2017, and 2020. Additionally, it allowed voters the ability to vote for the only non-territorial options available to the island to achieve sovereignty as either a state of the Union or as an independent nation, with or without a compact of free association.

As the U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed in *Vaello-Madero*,<sup>5</sup> Congress may discriminate against the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico in terms of benefits, services, and certain constitutional rights merely for residing in the territory. Even if Congress were to extend full parity in terms of federal laws and programs to Puerto Rico, as an unincorporated territory, there is no guarantee that a subsequent Congress could not pass legislation to revoke those extensions. Therefore, the exclusion of the current territory status from consideration is the only logical choice to definitively resolve the inequality and democratic deficit inherent to Puerto Rico’s current political status.

The compromise language that became the PRSA was introduced as [H.R. 8393](#) in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. Its introduction was preceded by two congressional hearings in the House Committee on Natural Resources, an advisory analysis from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) detailing the only constitutional viable options for Puerto Rico,<sup>6</sup> over a year of negotiations, and a public input forum in Puerto Rico. The success of H.R. 8393 was evident by the fact that it passed the House with the bipartisan vote of [233-191](#).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the Biden Administration released a [Statement of Administration Policy](#) (SAP) in support of H.R. 8393.<sup>8</sup> In the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, the PRSA was reintroduced in the House as [H.R. 2757](#) and gained the bipartisan support of [102](#) cosponsors.<sup>9</sup> In the Senate, the PRSA was introduced as [S. 3231](#) and gained [27](#) cosponsors;<sup>10</sup> which is the largest number in history of Senate cosponsors for any federal legislation intending to end Puerto Rico’s colonial territory status.<sup>11</sup>

On July 1, 2024, Fmr. Governor of Puerto Rico, Pedro Pierluisi exercised his authority under Puerto Rico’s Law 165 of 2020 to call a new status consultation.<sup>12</sup> He

<sup>4</sup> Puerto Rico Status Act, H.R. 8393, 117th Cong. §5(a)(2) (2022).

<sup>5</sup> *United States v. Vaello-Madero*, 142 S.Ct. 1539 (2022).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Justice, *Analysis of H.R. 1522, the Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act*, H. Comm. on Natural Res. (June 14, 2021), <https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/DOJ%20Analysis%20of%20HR%201522.pdf>; see also U.S. Dep’t of Justice, *Analysis of H.R. 2070, the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2021*, H. Comm. on Natural Res. (June 14, 2021), <https://democrats-naturalresources.house.gov/imo/media/doc/DOJ%20Analysis%20of%20HR%202070.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Roll Call 529, B. No. H.R. 8393, *On Passage Puerto Rico Status Act*, Clerk of the U.S. H.R., <https://clerk.house.gov/Votes/2022529> (last viewed on Mar. 2, 2025).

<sup>8</sup> The Am. Presidency Project, *Statement of Administration Policy: H.R. 8393 - Puerto Rico Status Act*, Univ. of Cal. Santa Barbara (Dec. 15, 2022), <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/statement-administration-policy-hr-8393-puerto-rico-status-act>.

<sup>9</sup> Puerto Rico Status Act, H.R. 2757, 118th Cong. (2023).

<sup>10</sup> Puerto Rico Status Act, S. 3231, 118th Cong. (2023).

<sup>11</sup> Charles R. Venator-Santiago, Volodymyr Gupan & José Javier Colón Morera, *Puerto Rico Status Archives Project: An Overview of Status Legislation for Puerto Rico*, Univ. of Conn. (Feb. 2024), [https://draft-archive-puerto-rican-studies-initiative-clas.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3729/2024/02/UConn\\_PRSA\\_P\\_A\\_R\\_I\\_2024\\_R.pdf](https://draft-archive-puerto-rican-studies-initiative-clas.media.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/3729/2024/02/UConn_PRSA_P_A_R_I_2024_R.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> *Act to Implement the 2020 Plebiscite Petition for Statehood, No. 165-2020*, P.R. State Elections Comm’n, <https://ceepur.org/plebiscito2024/docs/Law%20No.%20165%20of%202020.pdf> (last viewed on Mar. 2, 2025); see also S.B. 1674, 18th Legis. Assemb., 8th Sess. (P.R. 2020).



announced a non-binding plebiscite for the 2024 general elections to offer voters a choice between the non-territory status options as proposed and defined in the PRSA.<sup>13</sup> The plebiscite and the language on the ballot were challenged in court and ultimately approved by the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico.<sup>14</sup> On November 5, 2024, 58.6 percent of Puerto Ricans voted in favor of statehood, with a 63.6 percent participation rate.<sup>15</sup> However, despite the 2024 plebiscite being a constitutional and valid exercise of self-determination, Congress must still take action to implement a change in status.

### **Conclusion**

The House of Representatives has passed three bills to resolve Puerto Rico's status since 1998.<sup>16</sup> Yet no proposal has passed the Senate nor been enacted into law to definitively resolve the matter. The failure of Congress to act not only disregards the contributions and sacrifices of the U.S. citizens that call "la isla del encanto" home, but also weakens the U.S. by failing to meet its fundamental founding value of government by consent of the governed. It limits Puerto Rico's capacity to achieve economic competitiveness by keeping it in an unequal playing field, and it also endangers U.S. national security by keeping Puerto Rico weak at a time of increasing pressures by China in the Latin America and Caribbean regions.

Therefore, we urge you to address the root cause of Puerto Rico's inequality and disenfranchisement instead of merely dealing with the symptoms of territorial inequality. Congress must listen to the will of the island's voters and introduce legislation that will end Puerto Rico's undemocratic territory status and provide a binding offer of statehood. Only then will America live up to its highest ideals and strengthen the nation as a whole.

Sincerely,

George Laws García  
Executive Director  
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Irma Rodríguez  
President  
**Puerto Rico Escogió Estadidad**

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Rights**

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<sup>13</sup> Coral Murphy Marcos, *Puerto Rico will include status plebiscite in November's general elections*, Associated Press (July 1, 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/puerto-rico-status-plebiscite-election-e763c4d11e10a42fb557bd1bbd722614>.

<sup>14</sup> *Dalmau Ramírez v. Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico*, 2024 PRSC 95 (2024); see also Adriana Diaz Tirado, *Supreme Court rejects PIP's lawsuit to invalidate the local plebiscite*, El Nuevo Día, Aug. 28, 2024, <https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/tribunales/notas/tribunal-supremo-desestima-demanda-del-pip-para-invalidar-el-plebiscito-criollo/>.

<sup>15</sup> *Official Plebiscite Results 2024*, P.R. State Elections Comm'n (Jan. 17, 2025), [https://elecciones2024.ceepur.org/Plebiscito\\_2024\\_122/index.html#en/default/PLEBISCITO\\_Resume\\_n.xml](https://elecciones2024.ceepur.org/Plebiscito_2024_122/index.html#en/default/PLEBISCITO_Resume_n.xml).

<sup>16</sup> United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act, H.R. 856, 105th Cong. (1998); see also Puerto Rico Democracy Act of 2010, H.R. 2499, 111th Cong. (2010); see also Puerto Rico Status Act, H.R. 8393, 117th Cong. (2022).

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