



## GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO

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Ricardo A. Rosselló Nevares

March 2, 2017

Dear Member of Congress,

One hundred years ago today, March 2, 1917, on the eve of America's entry into World War I, the U.S. Congress made the people of Puerto Rico American citizens through P.L. 64-368, the Jones-Shafroth Act. Since then, Puerto Ricans have proven our loyalty and value to America in countless ways. Our men and women have served in the Armed Forces in every conflict from World War I to the present day global war on terrorism. Along the way, Puerto Ricans have earned countless honors including one Congressional Gold Medal for the 65th Infantry Borinqueneers, 9 Medals of Honor and thousands of Purple Hearts, all of which stand as testaments to the sacrifice Puerto Ricans have made to protect the American way of life.

Puerto Ricans have also become NASA engineers and even astronauts. We have served in all branches of government, including the U.S. Congress and the Supreme Court. We have been diplomats and Ambassadors representing America throughout the world. We have woven ourselves into America's cultural fabric through our musicians, actors, dances and foods. We have become role models for the many young Americans that enjoy America's favorite pastime, with multiple Puerto Rican players rising to the Baseball Hall of Fame. We have contributed our land and resources to defend U.S. national security. Moreover, Puerto Rico has grown deep economic ties with the states, now enjoying over \$70 billion per year in interstate commerce.

But this past century has also left the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico at a huge disadvantage compared to our fellow citizens in the states. We are subject to federal laws but don't have voting representation in the U.S. House or any representation in the U.S. Senate. Our sons and daughters in uniform can be sent to war by the President of the United States, yet even when we serve honorably we cannot vote for our Commander-in-Chief. Congress can and does treat us unequally under federal laws, many times leading to incoherent and arbitrary policies that limit our opportunities to maximize our economic potential and improve the quality of life on the island. We are considered domestic for some purposes, yet foreign for others. And although we deeply cherish our American citizenship, our rights as citizens are not guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. Instead, we rely on the now 100-year-old statute, which Congress could repeal if it so desired.

As recently as 2012, voters in Puerto Rico soundly rejected the current undemocratic and unequal territorial status, and more voters favored statehood than any other non-territorial option. Puerto Rico is being governed without the consent of the governed at the national level, and after the passage last year of P.L. 114-187, the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) we have lost full self-government at the local level too. It is now completely evident, both to the U.S. citizens on the island as well as to the U.S. Congress, that the current territorial status is totally obsolete and unable to meet the challenges of our time.



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Therefore, on this 100th anniversary of U.S. citizenship for Puerto Rico, I write to implore you that it's time to end the undignified and colonial territory status. On June 11th of this year, voters in Puerto Rico will accept Congress' offer to support the first ever federally sponsored plebiscite on the island's political relationship with the U.S. Pursuant to the appropriation included in P.L. 113-76, the Government of Puerto Rico will carry out a voter education campaign and a plebiscite on, "options that would resolve Puerto Rico's future political status". Congress has demanded that the choices for this process be limited to options that are permanent and with the U.S. Constitution and all federal law.

After decades of stateside politicians claiming support for "self-determination", it is imperative that Congress respect and adhere to the results of the plebiscite. The converse would be an affront to the most fundamental values of American democracy, including the right to self-determination and to government by the consent of the governed. As proud U.S. citizens for over a century Puerto Ricans have enriched the fabric of American society, now we ask for your leadership to help us finally and definitively transition to a fully democratic system of government whether that be statehood or separate nationhood.

During the next year, Puerto Rico will continue to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of U.S. citizenship. We ask you to join us in this historic celebration so that Puerto Rico can be placed on the path toward a form of government that is permanent, democratic, and that unleashes the island's full economic and productive potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ricardo A. Rosselló Nevares".

Ricardo A. Rosselló Nevares  
Governor of Puerto Rico