
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 693 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY ACOSTA, THOMAS, SCHLOSSBERG, ROZZI, BULLOCK,
SCHWEYER, PASHINSKI, MURT, CALTAGIRONE, O'BRIEN, FARINA,
M. DALEY, MAHONEY, YOUNGBLOOD, W. KELLER, STURLA, KORTZ,
V. BROWN, COHEN, DAWKINS AND KINSEY, FEBRUARY 10, 2016

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, FEBRUARY 10, 2016

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Congress and President of the United States to
2 develop a comprehensive plan to address the humanitarian and
3 fiscal crisis facing Puerto Rico.

4 WHEREAS, In June 2015, Puerto Rico's Governor Alejandro
5 Garcia Padilla declared that Commonwealth's \$72 million debt
6 "not payable," with the island effectively running out of cash
7 for the government to continue operating; and

8 WHEREAS, This economic crisis has forced a second "Great
9 Migration," much like after World War II, with more than 250,000
10 Puerto Ricans leaving the island since 2010; and

11 WHEREAS, Puerto Rico has taken extraordinary measures to
12 address the situation, including shuttering more than 100 public
13 schools, delaying people's tax refunds, increasing the
14 retirement age, borrowing from the worker's compensation fund,
15 withholding holiday bonuses and increasing the local sales tax
16 to a national high of 11.5%; and

17 WHEREAS, The Federal Government needs to take strong action

1 to stabilize Puerto Rico and help it restructure the debt by
2 incorporating bankruptcy and debt restructuring protections and
3 by providing Puerto Rico: the right to declare for Chapter 9
4 bankruptcy; health care equity, eliminating the annual
5 Medicaid/*Mi Salud* funding cap; and tax reform to institute tax
6 policies that foster economically diverse and living wage job
7 creation, which will create sustainable growth on the island;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, While the Earned Income Tax Credit is the nation's
10 largest anti-poverty cash assistance program that increases the
11 ability of workers in low-paying jobs to support themselves and
12 their families, the tax credit does not apply to Puerto Rico;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, The Child Tax Credit provides substantial relief for
15 families with children yet also applies in limited fashion in
16 Puerto Rico where only families with three or more children are
17 eligible for the tax credit refund; and

18 WHEREAS, Prior to 1985, Puerto Rico had the ability to file
19 for Chapter 9 bankruptcy, which was later taken from the
20 territory, and has since limited its ability to restructure the
21 island's debt on its own; and

22 WHEREAS, In October 2015, over 400 Puerto Rican elected
23 officials and community leaders, representing many different
24 organizations nationwide, convened in Orlando, Florida, to
25 discuss the fiscal crisis and a national call was issued to
26 establish "Unidos Para Puerto Rico" as a means to unite the
27 Puerto Rican Diaspora and the coalition of Puerto Rican elected
28 officials with the purpose of promoting a national campaign to
29 create a comprehensive national Puerto Rican agenda which
30 encompasses the problems affecting Puerto Ricans both on the

1 island and throughout the United States; and

2 WHEREAS, In November 2015, Puerto Rican leaders and allies in
3 Philadelphia met to discuss how Pennsylvania would engage in
4 this important education campaign and to organize PA 4 PR, as a
5 local call to action for Pennsylvania, asking community leaders,
6 clergy, elected officials and allies to join the national call
7 to action; and

8 WHEREAS, On Wednesday, December 2, 2015, hundreds of Puerto
9 Rican community leaders from Pennsylvania and across the country
10 traveled to Washington, DC, in a national call to action and
11 hosted a press conference and a full lobbying day with members
12 of Congress to promote a national Puerto Rican agenda and call
13 for congressional action to pass the following reforms of
14 bankruptcy and debt restructuring protections, health care
15 equity and tax reform before their holiday recess; and

16 WHEREAS, On Thursday, January 7, 2016, a Pennsylvania
17 Statewide PA 4 PR meeting was held in the City of Lancaster,
18 Lancaster County, to unify national Latino and civil rights
19 organizations, labor, women, LGBT, African-American and faith-
20 based entities in respectfully asking the Congress and the
21 President of the United States to address the humanitarian and
22 fiscal crisis in Puerto Rico and the inequalities against 3.5
23 million United States citizens. This crisis is emotional, moral,
24 economic, political and social to many of us. Understanding the
25 historic past and our moral obligation today to declare an
26 absolute repudiation to congressional neglect to Puerto Rico and
27 its citizens is a reflection of humanity and solidarity; and

28 WHEREAS, We need to act now to extend equal treatment to
29 Puerto Rico and its American citizens, 3.5 million who reside on
30 the island and 5 million in the Diaspora in the United States

1 and abroad; and

2 WHEREAS, Pennsylvania has the fourth largest Puerto Rican
3 population in the United States, after New York, New Jersey and
4 Florida, who are united in a call for action; therefore be it

5 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives join the
6 legislative action by City Councils in Philadelphia, Chicago,
7 New York City, Cleveland, Orlando and New Jersey standing in
8 unity on the national call to urge the Congress and the
9 President of the United States to provide Puerto Rico with the
10 tools to create a pathway to economic recovery.