
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 78 Session of
2019

INTRODUCED BY CRUZ, YOUNGBLOOD, SCHLOSSBERG, HILL-EVANS,
CALTAGIRONE, T. DAVIS, FREEMAN, KINSEY, JAMES AND NEILSON,
FEBRUARY 11, 2019

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Congress of the United States to recognize and act
2 upon the results of the June 11, 2017, Puerto Rican
3 plebiscite.

4 WHEREAS, The Constitution of the United States recognizes
5 states, the District of Columbia, Indian Tribes and territories
6 as four distinct forms of political status within the United
7 States; and

8 WHEREAS, Article 4, Section 3, Clause 2 of the Constitution
9 of the United States, known as the Territorial Clause, confers
10 on Congress the power to govern territories in local and
11 national matters; and

12 WHEREAS, The United States currently has 16 territories
13 beyond the 50 states, including Puerto Rico, Guam, the United
14 States Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands and American
15 Samoa, which are the only territories that are inhabited; and

16 WHEREAS, Of the five inhabited territories, Puerto Rico is
17 the largest, most populated and closest to the United States
18 mainland; and

1 WHEREAS, Approximately 3.5 million people live in Puerto Rico
2 and another 5 million Puerto Ricans live on the United States
3 mainland, including almost 424,000 living in the Commonwealth of
4 Pennsylvania; and

5 WHEREAS, Puerto Rico became a territory in 1898 through the
6 Treaty of Paris after the United States defeated Spain in the
7 Spanish-American War; and

8 WHEREAS, In 1900, Congress passed the Foraker Act to replace
9 the military government in Puerto Rico with a civilian
10 government and to establish the Resident Commissioner position
11 to represent Puerto Rico's interests in Washington as a
12 nonvoting member of the United States House of Representatives;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, Through passage of the Jones Act in 1917, Congress
15 extended United States citizenship to Puerto Ricans and
16 established a bill of rights for the island; and

17 WHEREAS, Congress twice recognized Puerto Rico's authority
18 over matters of internal governance, first in 1950 through
19 passage of the Federal Relations Act, and then through its
20 approval of Puerto Rico's Constitution in 1952; and

21 WHEREAS, Despite these advanced democratic rights, Puerto
22 Rico is still a territory under United States authority and
23 Puerto Ricans cannot vote in presidential elections unless they
24 move to one of the 50 states; and

25 WHEREAS, It has been the longstanding policy of the United
26 States that American citizens of territories such as Puerto Rico
27 can determine whether the territory should eventually become a
28 state or a nation; and

29 WHEREAS, Since 1967, Puerto Rico has held four plebiscites
30 and one Constitutional Amendment Referendum to determine the

1 will of the people regarding the island's political status; and

2 WHEREAS, Since the 1967 plebiscite, it has become apparent
3 that Puerto Rico's territorial condition constitutes an
4 unsustainable status of political subordination; and

5 WHEREAS, A majority of the voters rejected the continuation
6 of Puerto Rico's current territorial status in the plebiscite
7 held in Puerto Rico on November 6, 2012; and

8 WHEREAS, Under Public Law 113-76 of 2014, Congress responded
9 to Puerto Rico's 2012 plebiscite by appropriating money to
10 finance an objective, nonpartisan voter education campaign for a
11 new plebiscite with options proposed by the Elections Commission
12 of Puerto Rico that can resolve the question of the territory's
13 political status and are not in conflict with the Constitution,
14 laws and policies of the United States as certified by the
15 Department of Justice; and

16 WHEREAS, Puerto Rico enacted the Puerto Rico Immediate
17 Decolonization Act (Act No. 7-2017) on February 15, 2017, in
18 accordance with Public Law 113-76; and

19 WHEREAS, The Puerto Rico Immediate Decolonization Act
20 declared that no United States citizen, including those who
21 reside in Puerto Rico, deserves to have lesser opportunities,
22 lesser health services and a lesser quality of life than the
23 rest of his or her fellow citizens; and

24 WHEREAS, Article four of the Puerto Rico Immediate
25 Decolonization Act provided for the requirements of the
26 Plebiscite for the Immediate Decolonization of Puerto Rico that
27 was held on Sunday, June 11, 2017; and

28 WHEREAS, Ninety-seven percent of Puerto Ricans who
29 participated in the referendum voted in favor of statehood; and

30 WHEREAS, Support for statehood, if that is what the majority

1 of Puerto Ricans want, has been promised to Puerto Rico for
2 decades by politicians, including former Presidents George W.
3 Bush and Barack Obama; and

4 WHEREAS, During his presidential campaign, President Donald
5 Trump promised to support Puerto Rican statehood, although so
6 far during his presidency he has not made Puerto Rico a
7 priority, as displayed through his administration's handling of
8 hurricane disaster relief; and

9 WHEREAS, Puerto Rico's nonvoting congressional delegates have
10 introduced multiple bills over the years that would have granted
11 statehood to Puerto Rico based on the outcome of a vote on the
12 island, but these bills have never been acted upon; and

13 WHEREAS, Continued inaction by the incoming 116th Congress is
14 unacceptable and unethical; therefore be it

15 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the
16 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania urge the Congress of the United
17 States to recognize and act upon the results of the June 11,
18 2017, Puerto Rican plebiscite; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be sent to the
20 President of the United States, to the presiding officers of
21 each house of Congress and to each member of Congress from
22 Pennsylvania.