



September 17, 2021

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Senator
U.S. Senate
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Rubio:

On behalf of the National Puerto Rican Equality Coalition (NAPREC), the over 3.2 million U.S. citizens that reside in Puerto Rico, and the estimated 278,400 veterans of Puerto Rican descent who have defended this nation since the first World War, we write to petition and urge you to support and cosponsor the bipartisan S. 780, *Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act*. This legislation was introduced by Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) in the Senate, and by Congressman Darren Soto (D-FL-09) and Resident Commissioner Jenniffer González-Colón (R-PR At Large) in the House. Today we commemorate our *Constitution Day and Citizenship Day* to honor and celebrate the drafting of the U.S. Constitution and those who have become U.S. citizens. However, for the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico, equality as citizens is denied merely for residing on the island. To respect the will of voters in Puerto Rico, Congress must act and pass the *Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act*.

On November 3, 2020, a majority of Puerto Ricans residing on the island determined their future status and voted for equality through statehood. With a participation rate of 54.72 percent, the results of the November plebiscite were 52.52 percent (655,505 votes) “Yes” and 47.48 percent (592,671 votes) “No,” on whether the island should be admitted as a state.¹ The U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico have been asked the question regarding the island’s status three times in the last decade, with different language, and each time “statehood” has gained the majority of support. With a majority of Puerto Ricans definitively choosing their future status, it is time for Congress to act and extend a formal offer of admission through the enactment of the *Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act*.

The *Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act* respects the results of the plebiscite in November and provides a constitutionally valid and direct path to admission. The legislation calls for a final binding ratification vote on the statehood “Yes” or “No” question previously presented to Puerto

¹ Puerto Rico State Elections Commission, Plebiscite Results, https://elecciones2020.ceepur.org/Escrutinio_General_93/index.html#es/default/PLEBISCITO_Resumen.xml (Last visited June 9, 2021).

Rican voters. If the island chooses to become a state again, the bill establishes the terms of admission as a state to the Union and repeals all laws that are incompatible with the island's new status within 12 months. Therefore, the island's residents will have a final chance to vote "Yes" if they support statehood, or "No" if they support any of the alternative status options.

Since the first World War, Puerto Ricans have fought in every military conflict of the United States. From the honorable service of the Army's 65th Infantry Regiment, the Borinqueneers, who earned numerous awards and commendations for their valor such as the Congressional Gold Medal and two Presidential Unit Citations, to present day, Puerto Rican service members continue to defend and protect our country honorably. However, veterans and all Puerto Ricans who live on the island still lack the right to vote for their Commander in Chief, have voting representation in Congress, or have access to essential services and benefits merely for residing on the island. After more than 100 years of this injustice, we must move towards granting equality to our fellow U.S. citizens as a matter of civil rights and to honor Puerto Rican service members, who have given the ultimate sacrifice to protect the American way of life.

To put an end of the island's current colonial and territorial status, and in accordance with Article 4, Section 3 of the United States Constitution, we urge you to support and cosponsor S. 780, *Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act*. Statehood will guarantee that U.S. citizens residing in Puerto Rico have the same civil rights and congressional representation afforded to U.S. citizens in the 50 states. No territory that has requested admission as a state has been denied before. Puerto Ricans have self-determined, and it is now Congress' time to listen to voters on the island and ratify their will by establishing the means of admission as a state to the Union.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this matter. If you require additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the National Puerto Rican Equality Coalition at (407) 908-7151 or via email at info@naprec.org.

Sincerely,



Nathaniel Morell
Secretary
National Puerto Rican Equality Coalition



Dennis Freytes
Board Member
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