

State of Wisconsin



2001 Assembly Resolution 46

ENGROSSED RESOLUTION

Relating to: petitioning the President of the United States and the U.S. Congress to enact legislation that would define the political status options available to the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico and authorize a plebiscite to provide an opportunity for Puerto Ricans to make an informed decision regarding the island's future political status.

Whereas, in 1898, the United States, aided by a significant number of Puerto Rican citizens, defeated the Spanish in the Spanish–American War; and

Whereas, the Treaty of Paris signed by the United States on December 10, 1898, and ratified by the United States on February 6, 1899, formally ended the Spanish–American War and established Puerto Rico as a territory of the United States; and

Whereas, persons born in Puerto Rico have been and are U.S. citizens since 1917 but do not possess full citizenship rights and the people of Puerto Rico do not enjoy representative democracy as a state of the Union or as an independent republic; and, although U.S. citizens, they are not permitted to vote in U.S. presidential elections and have no voting representation in the U.S. Congress; and

Whereas, despite the fact that over 200,000 Puerto Ricans have fought in all wars participated in by the United States since World War I, including our current war against terrorism, and nearly 2,000 have sacrificed their lives for democratic principles and self–determination, and 4 of them have received the Congressional Medal of Honor, yet they are not allowed to vote for their Commander–in–Chief; and

Whereas, Puerto Ricans pay all federal taxes except income and estate taxes, but they receive lower levels of federal benefits than residents of the States, and are excluded from or have limited participation in certain federal programs; and

Whereas, the current status is not helping the economy of Puerto Rico and federal economic policy has fostered dependence, caused massive capital flight, and a tremendous brain drain; and the subsidizing of the present colonial relationship costs U.S. taxpayers approximately \$15 billion per year; and

Whereas, a resolution of the status issue would bring stability and economic development to the island that would sharply reduce or eliminate this burden on our taxpayers; and

Whereas, ever since the transition to commonwealth status in 1952, the majority of the people of Puerto Rico have sought an end to their status as a “territory”; and

Whereas, in over 100 years of U.S. sovereignty, the U.S. government has never formally consulted the American citizens of Puerto Rico on their political status preference, and in 1997 the legislature of Puerto Rico formally petitioned the U.S. Congress to respond to the democratic aspirations of the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico by means of a federally sanctioned plebiscite to be held no later than 1998, and Congress has not yet responded to this petition; and

Whereas, Puerto Rico has held 2 nonbinding referendums since 1993, and the most recent one indicated that only 0.06% of the population are satisfied with the status quo of being a territorial commonwealth, confirming that there is no longer the consent of the governed for the existing territorial status; and

Whereas, self-determination means presenting the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico with an informed choice among valid, noncolonial status alternatives outlined in a clear, unambiguous plebiscite consistent with the U.S. Constitution; and

Whereas, the state of Wisconsin has a significant Puerto Rican community and an ever-increasing Hispanic population which has and continues to contribute to the state’s economy and well-being; and

Whereas, the experience of the people of Wisconsin in resolving their own territorial status in 1848, after 65 years as a territory, makes them sympathetic to the aspirations of the people of Puerto Rico to resolve their own political status; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the assembly, That the members of the Wisconsin assembly request that the U.S. Congress and the President of the United States enact legislation that would define the political status options available to the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico and authorize a plebiscite to provide for Puerto Ricans to make an informed decision regarding the island’s future political status; and, be it further

Resolved, That the members of the Wisconsin assembly request the Wisconsin congressional delegation to actively promote and support timely action on this important national issue; and, be it further

Resolved, That the assembly chief clerk shall transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate, the Chairman of the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Resources Committee, and each senator and representative from Wisconsin in the Congress of the United States.

State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin

Representative Scott R. Jensen
Speaker of the Assembly

Date

John A. Scocos
Assembly Chief Clerk