

2001 ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 46

November 6, 2001 – Introduced by Representatives COLON, BLACK, RYBA, POCAN, BOYLE, TURNER, J. LEHMAN, SHERMAN and CARPENTER. Referred to Committee on Rules.

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

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

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

12 Whereas, persons born in Puerto Rico have been and are U.S. citizens since
13 1917 but do not possess full citizenship rights and the people of Puerto Rico do not
14 enjoy representative democracy as a state of the Union or as an independent

1 republic; and, although U.S. citizens, they are not permitted to vote in U.S.
2 presidential elections and have no voting representation in the U.S. Congress; and

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

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

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

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

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

21 Whereas, in over 100 years of U.S. sovereignty, the U.S. government has never
22 formally consulted the American citizens of Puerto Rico on their political status
23 preference, and in 1997 the legislature of Puerto Rico formally petitioned the U.S.
24 Congress to respond to the democratic aspirations of the U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico

1 by means of a federally sanctioned plebiscite to be held no later than 1998, and
2 Congress has not yet responded to this petition; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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(END)