

ASSOCIATION  
OF REPUBLICAN MAYORS  
OF PUERTO RICO

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August 15, 1997

The Honorable Newt Gingrich, MC  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232 The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

As Chairman of the Puerto Rico Republican Mayors Association, I would like to thank you for your support of H.R. 856, the "United States-Puerto Rico Political Status Act," which would authorize a non-binding plebiscite on the future political status of the 3.5 million American citizens living in Puerto Rico. I commend you, as well as House Resources Committee Chairman Don Young, for your vision to bring resolution to the ambiguity under which Puerto Ricans have lived for almost one hundred years as a territory.

As Republicans, we view your commitment to H.R. 856 as an important step towards attracting Hispanics--many of whom share the conservative values that Republicans are trying to promote--to the Party. As Puerto Ricans, we are enthused by the opportunity to finally express our preference for our future relationship with this great Nation in a clearly defined process, and with the appropriate oversight of the Congress.

We are concerned however, that approval of H.R. 856 might be threatened by the possible attachment of a strict "English as an official language" provision. If the intent of the Congress is to approve measures that would make English the official language of the United States, these requirements should apply to all States and territories, not just Puerto Rico. We therefore question efforts to make H.R. 856, which would merely set forth a process for self-determination in a U.S. territory, a vehicle to implement such policy. In effect, doing this would send a message to the American citizens of Puerto Rico that they are different from all others in this Nation. We understand that such actions would be difficult to reconcile with the Republican Party's minority outreach goals.


With this in mind, we urge you to exercise your leadership on this matter and ensure that the spirit of H.R. 856 is preserved by not allowing "English-only" provisions to be included in its legislative language. We also hope you will move H.R. 856 to the Floor as soon as possible.

As for myself and as chairman of the Puerto Rico Republican mayors Association, I feel a deep sense of commitment and value the deepest sense of ownership in sharing the American citizenship and value the myriad benefits which economic and social empowerment bring to a people.

Thank you for your critical support on this legislative action. On behalf of the Republican Party of Puerto Rico and as for myself our deepest gratitude in assuring success to a measure which holds to the utmost priority in Puerto Rico.

Kind regards.

Sincerely,



Hon. Angel F. Rodriguez Cabrera  
Chairman