

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. McDougall. Next, we are pleased to welcome Dora Pasarell, former Parks and Recreation Administration.

STATEMENT OF DORA PASARELL, FORMER PARKS AND RECREATION ADMINISTRATOR

Ms. PASARELL. Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Committee, I shall limit my comments to the time limit that you have assigned.

My name is Dora Pasarell and I served in government as a member of the Cabinet of former Governor Luis Ferre as Director of Public Parks and Recreation, and my participation today in these hearings is as an individual citizen, as one voice from the ranks of "We, the people."

In dealing with the complex problem of political status of Puerto Rico, the paramount consideration should be the plight of 3.4 million American citizens residing in the American territory of Puerto Rico under the American flag. We are governed by Congress without representation and without consent. The American citizens from Puerto Rico are not only devoid of the full rights and prerogatives of our citizenship, but the citizenship itself, allegedly, is not a constitutional one but a statutory citizenship that could be revoked by Congress at any time. This is obviously an inferior, second-rate citizenship that should not exist in our Nation.

Our great Nation has nurtured itself with millions of immigrants from foreign lands who have come to America, to this land of freedom, equality and opportunity, to make this their home and to become full-fledged citizens with all the rights and prerogatives as guaranteed by the Constitution.

But the American citizens born in the American territory of Puerto Rico, the overwhelming majority born after 1917 who have never possessed any other citizenship, have always cherished their citizenship with loyalty, dignity and pride, among whom many thousands have served in the armed forces with honor and valor second to none, and the many who gallantly laid their lives in defense of our Nation.

We are disenfranchised of the Nation, devoid of the fundamental rights on which our Nation stands, devoid of the constitutional citizenship of all other Americans, and even that granted to the foreign immigrants. This is a painful inequity and injustice.

Our great democracy is predicated on equality and justice for all. We are part of that "all," so equality and justice should not preclude, but instead should include, the United States citizens of Puerto Rico.

Congress alone has the responsibility and the obligation and the constitutional authority to redress this iniquitous situation and whatever plans are formulated in reference to the political relations of Puerto Rico with the United States, the primary concern of Congress should be to redress the injustice of this inferior second-rate citizenship.

The proposed referendum includes three status alternatives: statehood, independence, and estado libre asociado, or Commonwealth. To consider the commonwealth status, estado libre asso-

ciado, as a status alternative, is consonant to proposing the problem as a solution. The current status is precisely the problem.

Notwithstanding the massive propaganda and the intensive efforts trying to proclaim its merits, the irrefutable evidence is that estado libre asociado has failed to adequately address the basic political and social economic problems and it has failed as a status alternative.

Instead, this current status has flared up the status debate in ever-increasing intensity. As a result, Puerto Rico has agonized and anguished over political status. It is an ordeal that has sapped valuable energies of our people that could have been directed to the betterment of our society. It has drained the cohesion among neighbors, friends and families with deep ideological divisions.

Estado libre asociado has failed after 37 years, and it will continue to fail as a constitutional, dignified, democratic option. Only statehood and independence are options within the framework of the Constitution. Statehood is the only option of justice and equality that will guarantee a full-fledged American citizenship and permanent union with our Nation.

When the millions of foreigners want to come to America to share in the greatness of our Nation, it is inconceivable to think that the American citizens from Puerto Rico would want to cut off the ties with our Nation. Statehood is the only option to guarantee the political stability, the democratic freedoms and opportunities essential to the progress and well-being of this and future generations.

Ninety years ago, my grandfather, Dr. Manuel Sanogandia, a Commissioner from Puerto Rico in Washington, appealed to President William McKinley "that justice be done to the people of Puerto Rico." Today, 90 years later, I appeal to you for justice and equality for the people of Puerto Rico.

I wish to convey my support and appreciation to the Chairman and the other members of this Committee for your initiative and efforts to search for a final solution to the status problem of Puerto Rico. Yours is a historic commitment and a patriotic endeavor that will benefit Puerto Rico as well as the entire Nation.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pasarell follows:]

TESTIMONY OF MRS. DORA PASARELL
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE OF ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
AT HEARINGS ON SENATE DRAFT BILLS #710, #711 and #712
CALLING FOR A REFERENDUM ON THE POLITICAL STATUS
OF PUERTO RICO

San Juan, P. R.

June 19, 1989

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in these hearings concerning Senate draft Bills # 710, 711 and 712 calling for a referendum on the political status of Puerto Rico.

My name is Dora Pasarelli, wife, mother and grandmother, retired from a long business career, and service in government as a member of the Cabinet of former Governor Luis Ferré as Director of Public Parks and Recreation.

My participation in these hearings is as an individual citizen, as one voice from the ranks of we the people.

In dealing with this complex and confusing problem of political status of Puerto Rico, the paramount consideration should be the plight of the 3.4 million American citizens residing in the American territory of Puerto Rico under the American flag, who are governed by Congress without representation and without consent.

We, American citizens from Puerto Rico are not only devoid of the full rights and prerogatives of our citizenship, but this citizenship itself, allegedly, is not a constitutional citizenship, but a statutory citizenship that can be revoked by Congress at any time.

This is an inferior, second rate citizenship that should not exist in our Democracy.

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Our great nation has nurtured itself with millions of immigrants from foreign lands and foreign cultures, who have been received in America with open arms, in this land of freedom, equality and opportunity, to make this their home, and to become full-fledged citizens with all the rights and prerogatives as guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

But, the American citizens born in the American territory of Puerto Rico, the overwhelming majority born after 1917, who have never possessed any other citizenship, who have always cherished their citizenship with loyalty, dignity and pride, among whom many thousands have served in the Armed Forces with honor and valor second to none, and the many who gallantly laid their lives in defense of our nation, we are the disfranchised of the nation, devoid of fundamental rights on which our nation stands, devoid of the constitutional citizenship of all Americans and that granted to foreign immigrants.

This is a painful inequity, an injustice and a case of official discrimination.

Our great democracy is predicated on equality and justice for all. We are part of that all, so equality and justice should not preclude, but instead include the United States citizens of Puerto Rico.

Congress alone has the responsibility, the obligation and the constitutional authority to redress, to correct this iniquitous situation.

In whatever plans are formulated in reference to the political relations of Puerto Rico with the United States, the primary concern of Congress should be to redress the injustice of this inferior, second rate citizenship. The immense majority of the American citizens of Puerto Rico want the full-fledged-citizenship with all the rights and responsibilities that it entails

The proposed referendum includes three status alternatives: Statehood, Independence and Commonwealth or Estado Libre Asociado which is the official name of the current status.

To consider the current status, be it called Commonwealth or Estado Libre Asociado as a status alternative is consonant to proposing the problem as a solution. The current status is precisely the problem.

Notwithstanding the massive propaganda and the intensive efforts trying to proclaim its merits, the irrefutable evidence is that this Commonwealth status has failed to adequately address the basic political and socio-economic problems, and it has failed as a status alternative. Instead, this current status has flared up the status debate in ever increasing intensity. As a result, Puerto Rico has agonized and anguished over political status. It is an ordeal that has sapped valuable energies of our people that could have been directed to the betterment and welfare of our society. It has drained the cohesion among neighbors, friends and families with deep ideological divisions.

Commonwealth or Estado Libre Asociado has failed after 37 years, and it will continue to fail as a constitutional dignified democratic status option, inspite of the cosmetic rhetoric that its proponents attempt to apply to it.

Only Statehood and Independence are options within the framework of the Constitution.

There is no need to dwell on the consequences of Independence, Traditionally only a small minority has favored it, while the overwhelming majority will not willingly give up their American citizenship. What is happening in those Latinamerican republics around us is ample portrayal of what independence would mean to Puerto Rico.

Statehood is the only option of justice and equality that will guarantee a full-fledged American citizenship and permanent union within our nation.

When there are millions of foreigners who want to come to America, to share in the greatness of our nation, it is inconceivable to think that the American citizens from Puerto-Rico would cut off the ties with our nation.

Statehood is the only option to guarantee the political stability, the democratic freedoms and opportunities essential to the progress and well-being of this and future generations.

I permit myself to recommend that only viable alternatives within the framework of the Constitution should be included in the referendum; that each one be clearly defined including effect on citizenship and access to the U. S.; and have prior-Congress approval to be self-executing.

Only qualified voters within the Electoral Laws of Puerto Rico should be eligible to vote. However a separate reliable organization should be set up to conduct, supervise and implement the referendum instead of the actual Electoral Board, in order to guarantee a fair and scrupulous election.

I wish to convey my support and appreciation to the Chairman and members of this Committee for your initiative and efforts to search for a final solution to the status problem of Puerto Rico. Yours is a historic commitment and a patriotic endeavor that will be of benefit to Puerto Rico and to our entire nation.

Ninety years ago, my grandfather, Dr. Manuel Zeno Gandia, a Commissioner from Puerto Rico in Washington appealed to President William McKinley "that justice be done to the people of Puerto Rico".

Today, ninety years later I appeal to you for justice and equality to the people of Puerto Rico.
Thankyou.

Dora M. Pasarell
Dora M. Pasarell
Box 10081, Caparra Hts Sta
Puerto Rico 00922